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BEATRICE AND LUDOVICO KNEELING

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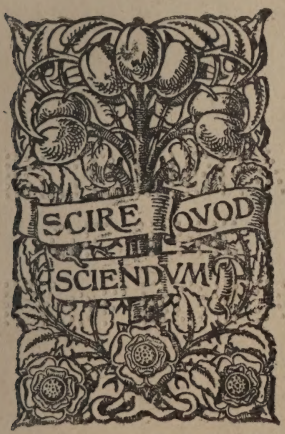
QUEENS OF THE RENAISSANCE

BY

M. BERESFORD RYLEY

WITH TWENTY-FOUR ILLUSTRATIONS



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To B——

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PREFACE

THERE are no two people who see with the same kind of vision. It is for this reason that, though twenty lives of the six women chosen for this book had been written previously, there would still, it seems to me, be room for a twenty-first. For though the facts might remain identical, there is no possible reiteration of another mind's exact outlook. Hence I have not scrupled to add these six character studies to the many volumes similar in scope and subject.

The book is called "Queens of the Renaissance," but Catherine of Siena lived before the Renaissance surged into being, and Anne of Brittany, though her two husbands brought its spirit into France, had not herself a hint of its lovely, penetrating eagerness. They are included because they help, nevertheless, to create continuity and coherence of impression, and the six leading, as they do naturally, one to the other, convey, in the mass, some co-ordinated notion of the Renaissance spirit.

The main object, perhaps, in writing at all lies in the intfinsic interest of any real life lived before us. For every existence is a *parti pris* towards existence; every character is a personal opinion upon the value of character, feeling, virtue, many things. No personality repeats another, no human drama renews just the same intricate complications of other dramas. In every life and in every person there is some element of uniqueness, some touch of speciality. Because of this even the dullest individuality becomes quickening in biography. It has, if no more, the pathos of its dulness, the didactic warnings of its refusals, the surprise of its individualizing blunders.

All the following lives convey inevitably and unconsciously some statement concerning the opportunity offered by existence. To one, it seemed a place for an ecstasy of joy, success, gratification; to another, a great educational establishment for the soul; to a third, an admirable groundwork for practical domestic arrangements and routine; to Renée of Ferrara, a bewildering, weary accumulation of difficulties and distress; to her more charming relative, an enigma shadowed always by the still greater and grimmer enigma of mortality. And lastly, for the strange, elusive Lucrezia, it is difficult to conceive what it must

have meant at all, unless a sequence of circumstances never, under any conditions, to be dwelt upon in their annihilating entirety, but just to be taken piecemeal day by day, reduced and simplified by the littleness of separate hours and moments.

In a book of this kind, where the intention is mainly concerned with character, and for which the reading was inevitably full of bypaths and excursions, a complete bibliography would merely fill many pages, while seeming to a great extent to touch but remotely upon the ladies referred to, but among recent authors a deep debt of gratitude for information received is due to the following: Jacob Burckhardt, Julia Cartwright, Augusta Drane, Ferdinand Gregorovius, R. Luzio, E. Renier, E. Rodoconarchi, and J. Addington Symonds.

Finally, in reference to the portraits included in the life of Beatrice D'Este, a brief statement is necessary. For not only that of Bianca, wife of Giangaleazzo, but also those of Il Moro's two mistresses, Cecilia Gallerani and Lucrezia Crivelli, are regrettably dubious. The picture of Bianca, however, by Ambrogio da Predis, is more than likely genuinely that of Bianca, though some writers still regard it as a likeness of Beatrice herself. It is to be wished that it were; her

prettiness then would have been incontestable and delicious. But in reality there is no hope. One has but to look at the other known portraits of Beatrice to see that her face was podgy, or nearly so, and that her charm came entirely and illusively from personal intelligence. It evaporated the moment one came to fix her appearance in sculpture or on canvas. Nature had not really done much for her. There was no outline, no striking feature, no ravishing freshness of colouring. On a stupid woman Beatrice's face would have been absolutely ugly. But she, through sheer "aliveness," sheer buoyant trickery of expression, conveyed in actuality the equivalent of prettiness. But it was all unconscious conjuring,—in reality Beatrice was a plain woman, with sufficient delightfulness to seem a pretty one, while the portrait of Bianca is unmistakably and lovingly good-looking.

As regards the portraits, again, of Il Moro's two mistresses, Cecilia Gallerani and Lucrezia Crivelli, there is no absolute certainty. The portrait facing page 6 in the life of Beatrice has been recently discovered in the collection of the Right Hon. the Earl of Roden, and in an article published by the *Burlington Magazine* it has been tentatively looked upon as that of Lucrezia

Crivelli. This does not, however, appear probable, because Lucrezia, at the time of Il Moro's infatuation, was a young girl, and the picture by Ambrogio da Predis is certainly that of a woman, and a woman, moreover, whose experiences have brought her perilously near the verge of cynicism.

At the same time, the portrait is not only beyond doubt that of a woman loved by Il Moro, but was presumably painted while his affection for her still continued, as not only are the little heart-shaped ornaments holding together the webs of her net thought to represent Il Moro's badge of a mulberry-leaf, but painted exquisitely in a space of $\frac{3}{8}$ by $\frac{5}{8}$ inch upon the plaque at the waistbelt is a Moor's head, another of Ludovico's badges, while the letters L. O. are placed on either side of it, and the two Sforza S. S. at the back. A discarded mistress, if Ambrogio—one of Il Moro's court painters—had painted her at all, would have had the discretion not to wear symbols obviously intended only for one beloved at that moment.

There seems—speculatively—every reason to suppose that the picture represents Cecilia Gallerani, who was already beyond the charm of youth before Ludovico reluctantly discarded her, and whom he not only cared for very greatly, but

for quite a number of years. Cecilia Gallerani, besides, to strengthen the supposition, was an exceptionally intellectual woman, and the portrait in the possession of the Earl of Roden expresses above everything to an almost disheartened intelligence. To think deeply while in the position of *any* man's mistress must leave embittering traces, and Cecilia became famous less even for physical attractions than because her mind was so intensely rich and receptive.

The other two—the pictures of "La Belle Ferronière" and the "Woman with the Weasel," —by Leonardo da Vinci, have both a contested identity. But since the first is now almost universally looked upon as being the portrait of Lucrezia Crevelli, the second must surely represent her also. For in both there is the same beautiful oval, the same youth, the same unfathomable eyes and gentle deceit of expression. Both, besides, represent to perfection the kind of beautiful girl likely to have drawn Ludovico into passionate admiration. He was no longer young when he cared for Lucrezia, and if Leonardo's paintings are really portraits of her, she was like some emblematical figure of perfect youthfulness, —unique and unrepeatable.

M. B. R.

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QUEENS OF THE RENAISSANCE

CATHERINE OF SIENA

1347–1380

CATHERINE of Siena does not actually belong to the Renaissance. At the same time she played an indirect part in furthering it, and she represented a strain of feeling which continued to the extreme limits of its duration. During the best period of the desire for culture, a successor—and imitator—of Catherine's, Sister Lucia, became a craze in certain parts of Italy. Duke Ercole of Ferrara, then old and troubled about his soul, took as deep and personal an interest in enticing her to Ferrara as he did in the details of his son's marriage to Lucrezia Borgia, just then being negotiated. The atmosphere Catherine created is never absent from the Renaissance. She fills out what is one-sided in the impression conveyed by the

women who follow. She was also the contemporary of Petrarch and Boccaccio, the acknowledged forerunners of the intellectual awakening that came after them, and being so, is well within the dawn, faint though it still was, of the coming Renaissance day. Finally, in her own person she contained so much power and fascination that to omit her, when there exists the least excuse for inclusion, would be wilfully to neglect one of the most enchanting characters among the women of Italian history.

The daughter of a well-to-do tradesman, Giacomo Benincasa, Catherine was born in Siena in 1347. Her father possessed several pleasant qualities, and a great reserve of speech, hating inherently all licence of expression. Catherine's mother, Lapa, on the other hand, belonged to an ordinary type of working woman—laborious, but irritable and narrow. She brought twenty-five children into the world, and her irascibility may have been not unconnected with this heroic achievement. The sons also, after their marriages, continued to live, with their wives—it being the custom at that time—under the parental roof. Even a sociable temperament would easily have found such a community difficult always to handle cordially.

STATUE IN WOOD OF ST. CATHERINE

BY NEROCCIO LANDI

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Catherine was Benincasa's youngest child. As a baby she proved extraordinarily attractive. She was, in fact, so sweet and radiant that the neighbours nicknamed her Euphrosyne, and her little person was much enticed and humoured. Unfortunately, like all children of that period, she became bewilderingly precocious, and with the first development of intelligence, the religious passion revealed itself. With Catherine the desire for spirituality was inborn. At five years old she formed the habit of going upstairs on her knees, reciting the "Hail, Mary," at every step. She delighted in being taken to churches and places of devotion, and at the age of six years her deliberate and piteous self-martyrdom commenced.

The child, during an errand on which she was sent, believed herself to have seen a holy vision. The incident had nothing extraordinary, for her imagination was keen, and her temperament nervous. In a later century, fed upon fairy stories, she would have seen gnomes, sprites, or golden-haired princesses. Instead, saturated in religious legends, she perceived Jesus Christ in magnificent robes, and with a tiara on His head, while on each side of Him stood a saint, and several nuns in white garments. This unchallenged

vision produced colossal consequences. The child went home convinced that God Himself had come to call her to a better life; proud, frightened, and exultant, she set her mind to find out, therefore, how she might best become as good as God wanted her to be.

This beginning of Catherine's religious life is painful to remember. She decided primarily that she must give up childish amusements; in addition, she determined to eat the least possible amount of food, and to fill up her life with penances in the manner of the grown-up holy men and women about her. She also procured some cord, and, having knotted it into a miniature scourge, formed the habit of secretly scourging herself until her back was lined with weals. Describing these first spiritual struggles of a child of six years old, Cafferini, her contemporary and biographer, says, "Moreover, by a secret instinct of grace, she understood that she had now entered on a warfare with nature, which demanded the mortification of every sense. She resolved, therefore, to add fasting and watching to her other penances, and in particular to abstain entirely from meat, so that when any was placed before her, she either gave it to her brother Stephen, who sat beside her, or threw it under the table

to the cats, in such a manner as to avoid notice."

This pitiable "warfare with nature" continued until she reached the age of twelve. Her parents, so far, had been pleased at her religious fervency. But at twelve years old the girl became marriageable. The comparative freedom of childhood ceased; Catherine was kept secluded in the house, besides being harried with injunctions concerning the arrangement of her hair and her dress.

She had, as a matter of fact, charming, warm brown hair. Unfortunately, a shade of gold was then fashionable, and Lapa, ambitious for a good marriage, insisted that the girl should do like others, and have it dyed that colour. Catherine resisted with all the strength of her frightened soul. But in the end, apparently through the persuasions of a favourite married sister, she allowed her hair to become golden. It was no sooner done than conscience suffered passionate remorse. In fact, to the end of life this one backsliding remained almost the sharpest regret Catherine possessed. She could never refer to it without sobbing, from which it is at least presumable that a canary-coloured head had its attractions for a saint of twelve years old.

Meanwhile, the choice of a husband became

imminent. At this Catherine's semi-passivity turned into actual panic. It was not possible both to marry and to give up one's life to God. Only, who would listen to the refusals of so young a girl? Following the practice of the Roman Catholic religion, she took her difficulties to her confessor, and was saved through the proposal of a rather questionable trick. She had only to cut her hair off to make marriage impossible: no Italian would marry a woman with a shaven head. Catherine rushed home, and at once did as she was told, covering her work, when she had finished, with a white linen coif. Virgins in Italy wore their hair flowing; the stratagem, therefore, did not exist an hour before discovery took place. Then followed a passionate domestic scene. The whole family appears for once to have unanimously agreed that Catherine's piety had overstepped the bounds of common sense. The loss of her child's hair left Lapa infuriated. Exasperation grew so intense that for a time, with the view to breaking her stubborn spirit, Catherine was deliberately ill-treated. A servant had been kept for rough work in the kitchen; she was dismissed, and Catherine made to take her place. But the girl had not a temperament that could be cowed. She was a true Sienese,

and Boccaccio, as well as others, speaks of the virile character of the people of Siena. The name Euphrosyne also still expressed her disposition. With a pretty childishness of imagination, she made religious play out of their harshness. Her father, she pretended, was Jesus Christ, Lapa she made the Virgin Mary, and her brothers and sisters the apostles and disciples. The kitchen became the innermost tabernacle of the temple where sacrifices were offered to God. In consequence, she went about diffusing radiance and a sober joy, and bewildering those who wanted to see her crushed and penitent.

In the end Giacomo interfered. He had the instinct of kindness, and was himself sincerely religious. Both the question of marriage and the system of ill-treatment were abandoned. A little later he gave consent to the pursuance of a religious vocation, and Catherine, still a child, became a member of the order of St. Dominic. It was not a strict community. The sisters did not live in retirement, but in their own homes, merely wearing a white veil and a black habit called *Mantellate.*

Just before this Catherine experienced a very human temptation. She became possessed by the longing to dress herself in the pretty clothes

of a rich married woman, and to go out flaunting in silks and extravagance. The wish is more likeable than her physical self-torturings. The latter gain their power to distress, in fact, to some extent because her few temptations show that Catherine had all the average longings of humanity, and was not devoid of the companionable frailties of ordinary men and women.

The temptation was, of course, conquered, and from the glad moment of taking her vows Catherine intensified every austerity of conduct. As a child she had been robust and hardy. But the frightful treatment to which she subjected her system would have ruined any constitution, and from the time she grew up she became more and more delicate, suffering, and neurotic. The desire to suppress her excesses is very great. One could write abundantly and give only a life overflowing in fragrant incidents. But in the case of Catherine, to pass over foolishness would entail not only a falsification of character, but a falsification also of the curious atmosphere from which she drew the principal inspirations of her conduct.

From the age of twelve she forced herself gradually to eat so little, that her stomach became finally incapable of retaining solid food at all.

How she kept life in her body for the last half of her existence is difficult to understand. Her bed, from the time she became a nun, consisted of a few planks with a log of wood for pillow. An iron band made part of her wearing apparel, and her discipline—if the one now shown as hers in the sacristy of St. Dominico is genuine—consisted of an iron chain with sharp projections for piercing and tearing the flesh. The idea was monstrous and horrible; nevertheless, its fortitude uplifts it into heroism. To pursue unflinchingly martyrdom such as this may be grotesque and ridiculous, but no invertebrate creature could contemplate it. Of all the violences, however, which Catherine did to her body, the one under which she suffered most acutely was her refusal of proper sleep. It is said, though it is extremely hard to believe, that for a certain length of time she took only half an hour's sleep in the twenty-four hours, and that—only every other day.

Notwithstanding this, a picture given of her at the time by Father Thomas Antonio Cafferini, also a member of St. Dominic, and an intimate friend of the family, is altogether charming. He asserts that her face was always gay and smiling, more especially if she were called upon to help those troubled or out of health. Other contemporaries

bear out this possession of an effulgent gladness. When she spoke her face became illuminated, and her smile was like some living radiance passing into the hearts of those she looked at. The same writer mentions her delight in singing and her love of flowers. A certain Fra Bartolomeo of Siena bears similar witness. He wrote, "She was always cheerful, and even merry." He mentioned, besides, that she "was passionately fond of flowers, and used to arrange them into exquisite bouquets." Catherine's personal writings are strewn with references to plants and blossoms. It was also part of the fulness of a character unusually rich in finer fascinations that she was constantly singing. Melancholy she scarcely knew. The spirituality which did not produce happiness, she could only feel as a spurious effort. Either it lacked love or understanding.

For years she lived as a recluse in her father's house, but while still in her teens it appeared to her—presumably through a natural wisdom of character—that God needed less personal worship than continuous benefits to others, out of her religious exaltation, and from that time Catherine's public career commenced. Almost the first result of her belief in being called to an active existence

was her constant attendance at the hospitals and among the lepers. One of the prettiest of all the stories told about her deals with her nursing labours. Pity had very small vitality either during the Middle Ages or the Renaissance; it was almost a dead quality of character, and the Sienese were particularly hardened by harsh experiences.

A woman who had lived a notoriously bad life lay dying in one of the hospitals, absolutely and deliberately neglected. A sinner laid low was scum to spit at for most people. Catherine saw no scum on earth. She smiled with all her native inborn softness at the dying woman, listened to her desolate complainings, her maundering reminiscences, gave her the nourishment she liked best, coddled her with sweet attentions, and finally, without any violent denunciations, brought her to repentance and tranquillity. A child might as tenderly have been coaxed out of a phase of naughtiness.

The incident brings one naturally to Catherine's reputation as a peacemaker. She was still a young girl when tales of her persuasiveness were told to amazed, arrested audiences throughout the country. The Sienese temper was fundamentally savage; nothing, therefore, could touch fancy

more than stories of a nature capable of acting as a gentle and cooling balm upon outrageousness. Catherine, as a matter of fact, possessed both the magnetism of intense belief and the power of innate urbanity. The first awed superstition by incomprehensible achievements. Forestalling the Christian Scientists, she had healed the sick by prayer, while her mere enticements brought about the end of many virulent dissensions.

To dabble with mystical methods is an old and universal weakness. The wife of a certain Francesco Tolomei, head of one of the noblest families in Siena, heard of Catherine's miracles, and being hard pressed by domestic difficulties, turned to the dyer's daughter for assistance. Madonna Tolomei was herself a profoundly religious woman, but she anguished with the consciousness that the rest of her family were damned. The eldest son, Giacomo, had murdered two men before he was grown up, and his cruelty had now become diabolical, ingenious, and systematic. There were also two daughters, bitten with worldliness to the marrow of their bones. Both were fast, dyed, and painted. Catherine offered to see the girls, but expressed no confidence as to the consequences. She found them

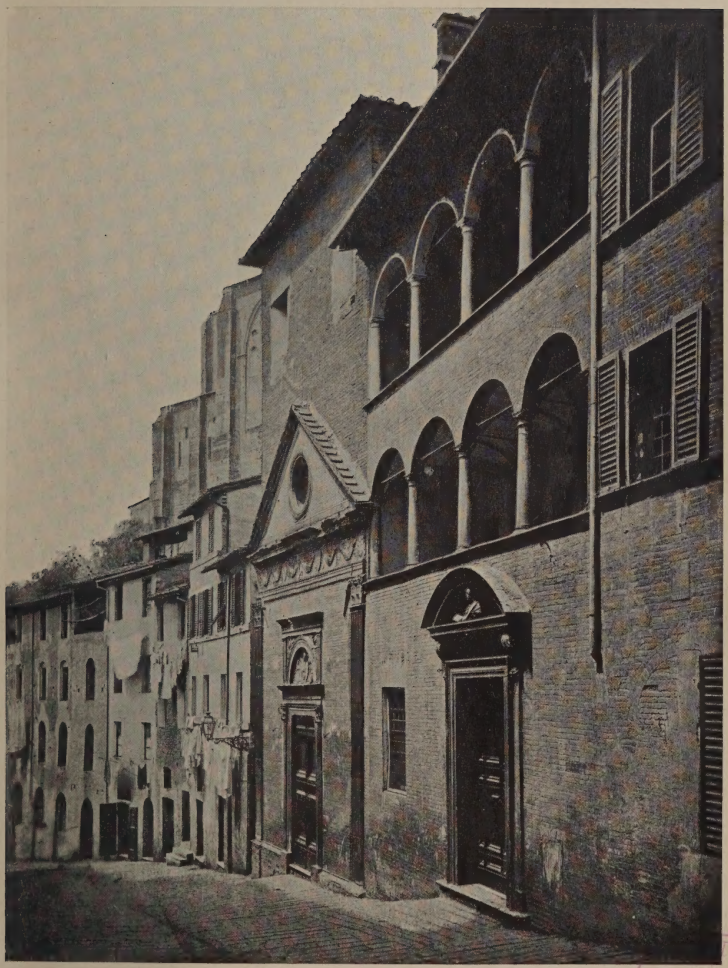
with the garish hair that always touched her to the quick, and possibly felt more yearningly because of it. No account has been given of the interview. The two sisters, with the Tolomei blood in their veins, could hardly have been easy natures to lure out of worldliness; but at the end of Catherine's visit, they were like lambs in the hands of a skilful shepherd. According to Cafferini, they threw their cosmetics into the gutter, cut off their gleaming hair, and in a few days joined the Sisters of St. Dominic. This is the kind of triumph of which Catherine's life is full. Her personal magnetism was extraordinary, her insight actually a touch of genius. At this time also she was young, and herself a living exponent of how seductively gay goodness could make one. To the end, in truth, she remained less a nun than a woman, and as a woman she was the embodiment of enchanting sympathies and comfort. Merely to see her,—soft, sweet, mysteriously comprehending,—was like a cordial to an aching heart. But the most astounding part of the Tolomei story is still to be told. Giacomo, with his mad and bloody passions, was away when his sisters' conversion took place. He came home to cow the house with terror. A lunatic let loose would have

been less persistently dangerous. Donna Tolomei, shaken now with physical and not spiritual forebodings, immediately sent a messenger to warn Catherine that no danger was too horrible to anticipate; in his present condition he was capable of doing anything. Catherine did not feel a quicker heart-beat. She was steeped in intuitions and spontaneous knowledge. Ostensibly as an act of exquisite courtesy, she sent Fra Bartolomeo — who must have been a brave man—to explain matters, while she prayed with all her heart and soul for the unmanageable sinner. Some hours later Bartolomeo came back. Catherine met him smiling; she knew already the news he brought. Her prayers—so passionately eager—had already been answered. Giacomo—the diabolical, murderous, implacable Giacomo—was already meek as a lamb under the shock of a new and overwhelming emotion. It is not the least curious part of the story that he remained a changed character, and continued to abominate wickedness with the same intensity that in his earlier days he had practised it. Towards the end of his life he even took the habit of a Dominican of the Tertiary Order, the obligations of this third order not being excessive.

There is another story of this earlier period more enchanting still, in its original and tragic graciousness. Only before telling it the question of Catherine's miracles should, perhaps, be dealt with, for they also commenced when she was scarcely out of childhood, and helped enormously to render her a recognized celebrity. They and her austerities are the unlikeable side of Catherine's holiness. At the same time no saint of the period could have obtained a hearing without them, and no human system could have endured the strain put upon it by a mediæval religious enthusiast, without producing self-hypnotism and catalepsy. Catherine, at an early age, fell into trances, described by her biographers as "ecstasies at the thought of God." Describing one of these ecstasies, her friend Raymond wrote "that on these occasions her body became stiff, and raised in the air, gave out a wonderful fragrance." All the old Catholic writers, to whom miracles were an integral part of saintship, were generous in multiplying supernatural details. A good deal has to be deducted from these statements; but even then there remain a good many so-called miracles attested by other and more critical witnesses. That she was seen raised from the ground while she prayed, is a fact sworn to by a number of

people. A man called Francesco Malevolti affirms that he saw her "innumerable times" raised from the ground as she prayed, and remaining suspended in the air more than a cubit above the earth. He mentions, to give weight to his evidence, that in order to test the reality of the occurrence, he and some others passed their hands between her and the floor—a thing perfectly easy to do. As this occurred in broad daylight, modern spiritualistic *séances* become clumsy in comparison. Catherine could do better in the fourteenth century.

The most important miracle of all was, of course, the stigmatization. That alone definitely assured her position as one with authority from God; it constituted the final and irrefutable sign of Divine and miraculous intervention. At the time of its occurrence Catherine was twenty-eight, and suffered extreme agony from it. The most curious circumstance about the stigmata in Catherine's case was that they were not properly visible during her lifetime, but became perfectly clear after her death. In this one matter her successor, St. Lucia, the religious celebrity of Lucrezia Borgia's day, outdid the woman she tried to follow. Her stigmata were always visible—bleeding wounds anybody could look at.



ST. CATHERINE'S HOUSE AT SIENA

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first warmth of life ran in every pulse. This bitter, inconceivable end unnerved him—he could not make up his mind to die. Suddenly he thought of Catherine, of whom other prisoners may have babbled, and sent a messenger imploring her to come to him. She wrote afterwards to her confessor a full description of the brief drama. Her presence almost immediately calmed and heartened him. Both were young, and Catherine, if not actually pretty, was delicious with overflowing tenderness. For Nicholas, besides the optimism communicated to him by her spiritual promises, there must have been the unconsidered but poignant fact that she was a woman and he a man. It is undeniable that no monk, however good, could have helped his dying to the same extent. Catherine not only rendered it possible to go through with courage, but in the end tinged it with something almost blessed. She was with him, it would seem, most of the time, and not only promised to accompany him to the scaffold when the day of execution came, but previously took him to Mass, and persuaded him to communicate for the first occasion in his life.

Nicholas had been nothing deeper than a young society man, and the wrench of this merciless conclusion was all the greater because of it.

Catherine, in her account of the circumstance, went on to say that he grew quite resigned, his only dread being lest his courage should fail him at the supreme moment. He repeated constantly, "Lord, be with me; abandon me not." To help him she reiterated her assurance that she would be with him at the last. In a moment his face brightened, and he asked her with a boyish impulsiveness how it was so great a sweetness was being vouchsafed to him. With this to look forward to he could face the end, not only with courage, but with something strangely akin to pleasure.

They met, as she had promised, at the scaffold next day. Catherine wrote concerning it that when he saw her his face broke into a smile, and that he begged her to make the sign of the cross upon his forehead. She did so, whispering that soon, very soon, he would have passed to a life that never ends. Then occurred the unforgettable incident of the story. At the best Nicholas was a creature not disciplined to suffering, and the worst moment had yet to come. Leaping to obey an intuition in itself exquisite, Catherine did what the prudery alone of most religious women would have made unthinkable. She took the boy's head in her thin, soft hands, and herself laid it in position upon the block. The action

was like a caress in which his last impressions melted. He murmured the words "Jesus and Catherine." The knife ripped through the air to his neck, and his head fell into the same trembling hands that had guided it during its last activity.

On its human side Catherine's spirituality was seldom less than perfect. Character and beauty emanated from her every spontaneous action. Nicholas di Toledo was only one of the many men she fascinated, and the fact renders the question of her personal appearance peculiarly interesting. The triumphs of a plain woman are always more stirring than those achieved by a simple success of feature. The "divine plainness," immortalized by Lamb, can convey subtleties not possible to the simple regularities of well-cut features. Catherine proved adorable to most people, but from her portraits it is practically impossible to receive any impression save that of dulness. This, at any time, was the last thing she could have been, but the conventions of the Roman Catholic Church in dealing with the portraits of saints opposed any lifelike treatment. The picture of her in the church of St. Domenico at Siena, said to be by Francesco Vanni, might do equally well for any other emaciated sister. There is no temperament in

it, no illumination, no visible sweetness. The eyes are half closed, the expression is inert and apathetic. The mouth is small but meaningless, the nose is long and well formed, the oval of the face delightful. Vanni did slightly better on another occasion. There is an engraving by him which is very nearly attractive. The eyes, owing to the religious demand for humility, are again half closed, but the mouth is both delightful and winning, and a half-smile plays about her expression. Given the glamour of vivacity, the kindling changes of life, and Catherine when young must have been delightful to look at. Certainly many men loved her. She had the power of being poignant in recollection, and disturbingly sweet in her bodily presence.

Even the painter Vanni, wicked enough to have been conversion-proof, yielded to the disquieting need she roused in him. He had been a great hater, and the men he hated were assassinated without after-remorse. For some amazing reason—probably that of curiosity—he consented to interview Catherine. She was out when he called, and her Confessor Raymond received him. According to Raymond, who describes the incident, Vanni soon grew bored, and presently remarked bluntly that he had promised to call

upon Catherine, but since she was out, and he was a busy man, he could not wait for her any longer.

At that moment Catherine appeared—according to Raymond, much to Vanni's disgust. But Catherine was all smiles, comfortableness, and simple ease of manner. Vanni's chances, in fact, of not being converted ended with her entrance. The manner of his surrender was humorously characteristic of the man himself. Catherine—she was always so clever when she was good—presently left the room. No woman ever knew better when another word would have been too much. She had hardly gone when Vanni broke out that, for the sake of courtesy, he could not wholly refuse her some gratification. At the moment he had four virulent hatreds, but to please Catherine he would give up, in the case of one of them, all thoughts of vengeance. He then started to leave the house, but before he reached the door stopped suddenly and declared he could hardly draw his breath, so intense was the sense of peace and ecstasy this one small action of the right kind had given him. Evidently it was useless to hold out against her influence, and he then and there declared himself conquered, and ready to abandon all the vices he could under Catherine's gentle guidance.

Thus came an end to Vanni's murders. Catherine held him for the rest of his days. It is only to be regretted that he did not paint her portrait before instead of after his conversion. He would have attended less to her reputation as a saint, and more to what was lovely and pictorial in her person.

Catherine no longer lived at home. She had instituted an informal sisterhood at Siena, where "Mantellate" sisters from every part of Lombardy lived in community. Her work still continued among the sick, the lepers, and prisoners. But rumours of her miracles, and of an almost miraculous gift of persuasion, were spreading to many parts of Italy. Talk of the dyer's daughter had already reached the ears of the Pope at Avignon, and was paving the way to further political successes. Before Catherine had passed out of her teens she employed four secretaries to cope with the colossal inflow of correspondence that reached her. It was through the urgency of help in answering letters in fact that Catherine made the great friendship of her life, and drew under her influence the man who largely contributed towards keeping natural feelings alive in her.

Stephen Marconi never cast off a cheerful

and innate earthliness. He came across Catherine originally, as so many people did, over the matter of a Sienese family feud. Stephen, headstrong and exuberant, had roused ill-feeling in both the Tolomei and Rinaldini families. Torrents of blood loomed as the sole termination. Mutual acquaintances had made useless attempts to produce peace; at the last crisis before violence Stephen's mother implored him to go to the "Mantellate" sister. The suggestion drew some contemptuous comments. But the woman persisted, and essentially good-natured, Stephen went in order to pacify her. He had every reason subsequently to thank the solicitations that overbore derision. Catherine settled everything with absolute successfulness, Stephen himself speaking of the reconciliation that followed as truly miraculous.

More extraordinary than the reconciliation even was the effect of Catherine's individuality upon Stephen Marconi. He possessed no natural aptitude for spirituality. Handsome, irresponsible, sought after, he epitomized effervescent worldliness. But, having once seen Catherine, he could not keep away. Excuses were raked together for further interviews, and one day, finding her overburdened with correspondence, he wrote a

letter at her dictation. It was the beginning of the end. At first informally, and later explicitly, he became one of her secretaries; presently also a member of what was called her "spiritual family."

Siena relished as a joke the dandy converted by the ascetic, but Stephen was unconcerned. An irrepressible humourist, he appreciated to the full the oddity of the situation; though if jocose, he was also deeply contented. Catherine had become almost instantly the instigating motive of his life, the one precious thing his heart needed. Catherine, on her side, was known to care for him more than for almost any other person. Her relations with him became those of a deep and exciting friendship. Towards the end of her life she heard a report that Stephen had definitely cast off his semi-worldliness and taken ascetic vows. Catherine should have known an exquisite and glowing comfort. Instead of it, her letter to him on the subject is very nearly petulant. That any action should have been taken without first becoming a matter of confidences between them clearly unspeakably hurt her. She wrote that of course it was a great joy to hear that he desired to lead a better life, but that she was "very surprised" that he should have made any decision without previously having said a word

to her about it. She added further that there was something in the matter that she could not understand, though she prayed that whatever he did would prove to be for the benefit of his soul.

There is more sign in this of a woman stung by an unexpected neglect, than any religious exaltation at a soul saved. Stephen had not become a monk, and the misunderstanding swiftly passed over. But the letter is pleasant reading, because it was written at a time when Catherine's mysticism threatened to overshadow the purely human kindnesses of her earlier years. The idea of Christ as the heavenly Husband had developed from vague symbolism into a definite expression of spiritual familiarity. It was an unrealized element of good fortune that Stephen's whimsical frivolity kept alive in her a strain of normal sensations. She suffered whenever they were separated, and among the last letters she ever wrote, moreover, was one to Stephen with the pathetic, dependent cry, "When will you come, Stephen? Oh, come soon!"

Another secretary closely associated with Catherine's life for many years was Neri di Landoccio, a poet belonging to the group of dawning Renaissance writers. He suffered from melancholy, and having once met Catherine,

naturally clung to the heartening radiance of her presence. From his letters, his youth appears to have been vicious. He was, at any rate, haunted by the notion that his misdemeanours were greater than God would be likely to forgive. He worried himself into a dangerous dismalness—a gloom perceiving no remedy. Then Catherine wrote him a long letter. She reiterated that God was far more ready to forgive than humanity to offend; that He was the Physician, and mankind His sick and ailing children. She told him that sadness constituted the worst fault of all in a disciple of Christ. To believe in the unplumbable love of God, and still persist in disheartenment, was a form of unrighteousness.

Neri did his best, but a gentle wistfulness penetrated his disposition, and not even Catherine could give him gaiety of thoughts. He and Stephen Marconi—the extreme opposites in temperament—became deeply attached to one another. They corresponded when apart, and Stephen, after Catherine's death, called Neri "among those whom the Lord has engrafted in the very innermost depths of my heart." A third man constantly in Catherine's society was her Confessor Raymond. Two small incidents told by himself, and against himself, suggest a perfectly

honest and rather pleasant temperament, but somewhat limited spiritual capacity. In the first he confesses that when on their journeys great multitudes thronged to Catherine for confession and comfort, and that the fact of having to go for hours without food or rest greatly annoyed as well as wearied him.

From the other, both issue rather sweetly, but Catherine with almost a touch of greatness. Raymond, who again tells the story, says that she loved to talk to him upon spiritual matters, but that, not having the same mystical sensibility, these conversations frequently sent him to sleep. Catherine, absorbed in her subject, would continue for some time talking without perceiving that she lacked a listener, but when she did, she would merely wake the other, and good-humouredly tease him for allowing her to talk to the walls.

Catherine had by nature the sanest and tenderest common sense. It was she who wrote of prayer that everything done for the love of God or of our neighbours was a form of prayer, and those who were always doing good were always, as it were, at prayer. Love of one's fellow-creatures was practically one long-continued lifting of the heart to God.

When Catherine came to the political portion

her life, the point at which she may be said to have indirectly affected the Renaissance in Italy was reached. The popes were still at Avignon, while Rome clamoured for a return of the papacy to its original capital. Petrarch, in a letter, pictured Rome as a venerable matron standing desolate and in rags at the gate of the Vatican. "I asked at last," he wrote, "her name, and she murmured it forth. It reached me through the void, in the midst of sobs—it was Roma." Certainly, since the removal of the popes to France, Rome, as a city, had gone to pieces. The churches were in ruins, grass grew through the pavements up to the very steps of St. Peter's, peaceful sheep used its environments for pasturage. As the two great families of the town, the Colonna and Orsini fought unceasingly for supremacy, while the people were equally pestered, tortured, and destroyed by both. Save for those who fancied murder as a profession, life had grown a nightmare; decency and quiet were as things of which even the ashes had been scattered.

Catherine, like Petrarch, flung the weight of her eloquence on the side of the Romans, and Gregory's return to Italy is always attributed by Roman Catholics to her influence. But before

this question had become poignant between them, Gregory had already tested Catherine's good sense in two political missions—one to Lucca, and one to Pisa. Both were successfully concluded, and in consequence, when Florence rose openly against the authority of the Pope, Catherine was chosen for a third time to conduct mediation. The employment of any woman as a diplomatic agent as early as 1370, was an extraordinary circumstance. During the Renaissance, frequent use was made of the intellectual adroitness of women. But, in Catherine's day, females, as Boccaccio states definitely, had few occupations besides house-bound duties and the excitements of intrigue.

Catherine created an admirable impression in Florence. On her arrival she was formally met by the principal men of the city. The Florentine Republic had itself invited her to come to their assistance. At the same time pure enthusiasm would have effected nothing. Consummate intelligence only could move the Florentines. Each Bull that came from the French Court, and from a pope with every personal interest in a foreign country, newly exasperated them. Catherine watched warily, judging character and manipulating it, until Guelfs and Ghibellines, acute in

unfailing antagonisms, equally authorized her to commence peace negotiations at Avignon. Catherine immediately started for France. Stephen Marconi went with her, and the actual journey must have filled her with many unavoidable pleasures. To begin with, she loved the country. In addition, the gypsy travelling of the day entailed perpetual chance incidents and unxpected humanizing makeshifts. A week of gentle progress among Italian scenery would keep the joy of life stirring in most people, if only unawares.

At Avignon her story becomes, even more than before, the dramatic triumph of personality. When she came nobody wanted her. The cardinals had strong reasons for not wishing an ascetic's influence in the palace; Gregory, inert and ailing, flinched at the thought of a person noted for arousing qualities. She was received, notwithstanding, with ceremony. At her first audience, Gregory sat dressed in full canonicals, and surrounded by the entire conclave of cardinals, like a brilliant jewel in a purple case. Catherine behaved meekly, though in all likelihood her thoughts were less quiet than usual. For the papal residence was a gorgeous place; there were galleries, marble staircases, colonnades, magnificent gardens, elegant fountains. The

ultimate possibility of luxury lay before Catherine's sober eyes, the very air itself being perfumed.

This was sufficient to have perturbed her, for a markedly unclerical influence emanated from so much comfort. But the women who filled the palace jarred still more emphatically. Their sumptuous persons were obviously at home —the very atmosphere indicated femininity. A large number were, in fact, mistresses of the cardinals; the rest, relatives and friends of the Pope, who had been granted apartments in the palace. Gregory's own morals have never been questioned. He sanctioned, by ignoring them, the scandals of his household, but his own life was that of an innocent and cultivated gentleman, with a liking for expensive living. Raynaldus, in his "Ecclesiasticus Annals," says that he was of an affectionate and domestic nature, loving his own people, and, in fact, too much led by them, especially in the matter of benefices. His private life was above reproach,— chaste, kindly, and generous. A scholarly man, he delighted in the society of other scholars. At Rome he instantly remitted all the duties on corn, hay, wine, etc., which the clergy had previously levied, and which fell most heavily on the poor people. But the troubles and anxieties that

followed his return to Italy, added to an internal disease, from which he had for some time suffered, brought about his death at the age of sixty-seven.

This internal disease had something to do with the gentle inertia of Gregory's conduct. Once roused by Catherine to a certitude as to where his duty lay, he did it regardless of every personal inclination and affection.

But at the commencement of Catherine's visit, the question was solely how best to deal with the disaffected Florentines. The issue did not prove gratifying. The Government had promised Catherine to send ambassadors to Avignon, suing for peace. New dissensions leaping up between Guelfs and Ghibellines, none were sent, and negotiations collapsed. In the mean time the ladies at Avignon had grown interested in the attenuated sister, who passed them constantly on her way to and from an audience. They started primarily with the frank indifference of society women to another of a lower class. But indifference became painful interest when in a few days it was breathed tempestuously that this pale woman had come almost solely in order to persuade the Pope to return to the Vatican at Rome. Scared and

disordered, the papal ladies ceased to look insolent; they set themselves instead to conciliate the "Mantellate" woman. Led by the Pope's sister, the Countess Valentinois, they made religion fashionable. Discarding all dancing, they instituted afternoon parties for pious conversation. The Countess Valentinois also visited Catherine in her own room, and after a few days, whenever Catherine went to the chapel to pray, she found all the court ladies following her example. Raymond, never very perspicacious, owns to being moved by "such unexpected signs of grace." He even admired the lovely gowns and misleading courtseys of the seemingly repentant ladies. Clearly a little susceptible, Catherine's churlish indifference greatly annoyed him. As her confessor, he had the opportunity of chiding her for this incivility—it was painful to see such pretty, graceful creatures repulsed so sternly. But Catherine upon this subject was adamant, and merely replying that had he the smallest inkling of the true dispositions of these mistresses of the cardinals, he would be nothing less than horrified.

Raymond, one imagines, still privately clung to a more pacific opinion; but if the story generally attributed to the Pope's niece is true, his eyes were soon opened to the real sanctity of

these ladies. Catherine had fallen into one of the trances frequent with her when at prayer. Elys de Beaufort Turenne happened to be kneeling conveniently near, and the opportunity to expose a spurious absorption thrilled her with pernicious pleasure. The temptation was too exceptionable to resist, and bending over, she presently ran a big pin into the Mantellate's toe. The joke, as far as she was concerned, spurted into no more life than saturated fireworks. Catherine never stirred—unaware of the incident until afterwards. But Raymond realized for the future that some courtesies are means of concealment only.

The women of the Pope's household were not alone in disliking Catherine. The cardinals objected to her as strongly. She had come to labour against everything pleasing in their lives. Those won over, besides, praised immoderately, and the instinct to strike a balance is natural and intuitive.

Her spiritual pretensions had not even, as far as they were concerned, been proved to be genuine. They solicited from the Pope, therefore, an interview with the Mantellate nun, in which the soundness of her theology might be tested. This encounter lasted from noon until

late in the evening, during the whole of which time they endeavoured to confuse her into foolishness. But Catherine had a very clear brain and a very quick one. She knew her subject, and, being a clever woman, in a few minutes also, roughly, the temperaments of the men she was dealing with. The thought is a purely personal one, but it is difficult not to believe that she enjoyed the excitement. Catherine was humble through instinct, but she must have realized that she was considerably more capable than most people. Stephen Marconi, present during the interview, says that two of them were enticed over almost immediately, and took sides with Catherine against their own party. The questions put, however, were anything but easy to deal with. Among other points they queried how she knew that she was not really in the subtle clutches of Satan; it was no uncommon trick for the Evil One to change himself into an angel of light, or sham to be a vision of Christ himself. All this time her extraordinary manner of life might be simply a cunning prelude to damnation.

Catherine neither wavered nor deliberated; her calm was gracious and simple; she was exquisitely willing to be interrogated. The cardinals gave in; the struggle over, they had even

the grace to admit that "they had never met a soul at once so humble and so illuminated." Gregory, inherently a gentleman, afterwards apologized to Catherine for having permitted her to be molested by them, and from that time her troubles with the cardinals at any rate terminated.

Gregory himself had from the beginning been openly impressed by her. She left Avignon before the actual journey to Rome was made, but her passionately eager persuasions were the fire at which Gregory's conscience chiefly ignited. For his household became desperate and loquacious at the mere suggestion. Gregory also had been born in France; all his roots were in the genial soil of Avignon. But Catherine would not let the matter rest. In a yearning and courageous letter, beginning, "Holy Father, I, your miserable little daughter Catherine," she urged him to be overborne by nobody against doing his duty, for if God was with him, nobody could be against him.

Gregory went, and in a man old, fearsome, and extremely out of health, the action has an element of greatness. For the reputation of Rome, constantly reiterated by those about him, was very much like that of a den of wild beasts. Ser Amily, a provincial poet, who gives a rhymed

description of the journey from Avignon, says, further, that all the physicians and astrologers prophesied a fatal termination to the expedition, but adds that they had apparently misread the constellations, as after some terrifying storms they sailed for the rest of the way upon a tranquil sea.

The fatal termination merely tarried somewhat, though the entrance into Rome proved a triumphant pageant. The streets had been laid with carpets, white flowers rained from every window—no welcome could have looked more cordial or inspiriting. The entry once over, however, Gregory found himself alone in an inimical country. Catherine wrote encouraging letters to him to discard all fears and strenuously to do all he could. But Gregory *had* done all he could. Rome, depraved and indocile, required a sterner nature at its head. He was ill and overtired, and fourteen months after having reached Italy, died, lonely and disheartened, at the age of sixty-seven.

Urban VI., by birth a peasant, short, squat, unpolished, succeeded him. The election was instantly unpopular. Half the people desired a French pope, residenced at Avignon and keeping French interests uppermost. The rest

writhed under the truculent uncouthness of the new Pope, hating him personally. Matters became so envenomed that the most acutely aggrieved presently declared his election to have been illegal, and proceeded to place another pope at Avignon, known as Clement VII.

There were, in consequence, two popes—one at Rome, and the other in France. Both claimed supreme authority, and the confusion produced by them brought the papacy very near to the ridiculous. Then commenced, according to Muratori, a long series of terrible scandals in the Church. The result was unceasing private and public dissensions, incessantly culminating in murder. Urban excommunicated Clement and his cardinals. Clement, on his part, excommunicated Urban and his followers. The same benefices were conferred on different persons by the rival popes, each appointing his own bishop to every vacant see. Urban had been one of the cardinals during Catherine's momentous stay at Avignon, and knowing his character, she wrote him after his election some very wistful counsel. The necessity of behaving benevolently was like a cry wrung out of her involuntarily; again and again, in different phraseology, she begged him to "restrain a little those too

quick movements with which nature inspires you."

This puts matters prettily—with an innate tact of feeling. Urban, in reality, was a man destitute of pleasant impulses. Fundamentally irritable, he possessed no control of utterance. Towards the cardinals his manners were inexcusable. He shouted the word "Fool!" at them upon the least hint of contradiction: over a difference of opinion he blurted furiously, "Hold your tongue; you don't know what you are talking about." Having determined to put down the rampant cupidity and immorality of these same cardinals, he raided their palaces as the quickest method of exposing them. On the other hand, he was a man of absolute probity, austerity, and courage. Petrarch had several times attacked the gluttony of high ecclesiastics. Urban ordered that one course only was ever to be seen upon the table of any prelate whatsoever, and adhered to the rule himself even upon occasions of hospitality. The following incident is a good example of his courage. As a result of the schism and his own extreme unpopularity, the people of Rome broke into open rebellion. The mob rushed to storm the Vatican. At the first rumour the household had fled to take refuge in other places.

Only Urban refused to move, and remained alone in the great empty palace. When the mob stormed the doors and made for the Pope, they found him sitting motionless upon the throne, dressed in full pontifical splendour and holding the cross in solemn defiance in one upraised hand. The sight of his immovable figure, dramatic, repellent, denunciatory, broke the nerve of the impressionable Romans. They saw before them the representative of God, and with incoherent noises, fearful of eternal wrath, they fled, leaving the rigid figure impassive as an image, alone once more.

It was with Urban that Catherine went through the last exciting interview of her life. The impression left by her personality at Avignon must have been considerable, for when the election of Clement VII. took place and divided the Church into two disordered and querulous factions, the man who could not support a single adverse suggestion actually sent for Catherine to come and help him render the people of Rome at least loyal to the true Head of the Church. Catherine, though by now very frail in body, set out immediately, taking twenty helpful people with her, but, for some reason not given, leaving Stephen Marconi behind. Then, when she had

got to Rome, and had recovered from the exhaustion of the journey, Urban insisted that she should give an address upon the schism before the entire assembly of cardinals.

She could only have looked a rather wan and paltry object set against the lace and silk and breadth of the well-fed cardinals. She was by this time nothing but a narrow line of black draperies and a thin white face. But the moment she began to speak the old warmth leapt into her voice, and the nun became more deeply rich in colour than all the scarlet and purple she fronted. Catherine never lost her head or her courage. She was there to rouse the sluggish morals of the cardinals, but she was quite aware that Urban stood almost as much in need of improvement as they did. With admirable clarity she laid stress upon the fact that the only weapons suitable for a pope were patience and charity. Urban owned neither, but the pluck and eloquence of the woman reached some responsive feeling, and he praised her then and there in a generous abundance of phrases. Unfortunately he did nothing else, and the following Christmas Catherine sent him another cajoling reminder—the kind of reminder only a subtle woman, and one with charming ways in private life, would have thought of. She

preserved some oranges, coated them with sugar, and having gilded them, sent them to the Pope. With the present came a note, explaining that in the preserving all the acidity of the orange had been drawn out, and that, like the orange, the fruit of the soul, when prepared and sweetened and gilded on the outside with the gold of tenderness, would overcome all the evil results of the late schism, or, as with a careful selection of an unhurtful word, she put it—"the late mischance."

Urban had previously empowered her to invite to Rome in his name whoever she considered would be useful to the divided Church in its hour of need. Among those Catherine wrote to William of England and Anthony of Nice, two friends, who lived in a pleasant convent at Lecceto, a few miles from Siena. A quaint correspondence resulted, for the two old men were sadly shaken in their comfortable habits by Catherine's letter. Yet the letter itself was a singularly good one. She states in it plainly that the Church was in such dire necessity that the time had come to give up all questions of peace and solitude in order to succour her.

There were few characters that Catherine

could not understand; certainly she understood her two friars perfectly. For the peace and quiet of their country retreat, where they sat and talked in the shady woods, had made them absolutely flabby of spirit. The thought of change and bustle flustered them from head to foot. Catherine had to write again, and this time she wrote with some directness that this was a crisis when character became visibly tested, and when there was no mistaking who really were the true servants of God, and who were merely seekers of a way of life personally congenial to them. These latter, she said, seemed to think that God dwelt in one particular place, and could not be found in any other. This letter must have harried the two old gentlemen sadly. Friar Anthony came to Rome at last, and though it is not clear whether Friar William accompanied him or not, it is probable that, when one gave in, both did.

Catherine endured great fatigue in Rome; it drained the remnant of strength left in her. Nevertheless she sent a letter from there to Stephen that was still almost playful. It is in this letter that occurred the winning petulance concerning the rumours of Stephen's conversion. How little she could do without him issued again in a still later epistle, when she wrote to him,

"Have patience with me." At this time she was ill, in pain, tired to breaking-point with the Roman risings against the Pope. The schism had spread rapidly. Queen Joanna of Naples, to whom Catherine wrote regretably stern letters, had flung her influence upon the side of Clement. Urban grew so uncertain that there was talk of sending Catherine—nearly dead through the strain already—to Paris, as the only ambassador likely to draw the French king over to the true Pontiff. She wrote instead, and while her letter was on its way, Charles V. joined the Anti-pope party.

When Rome, at least, had grown comparatively reconciled to Urban, Catherine returned to Siena. She was thirty-three, and the radiance that had magnetized men into contemplating even death with tranquillity, if she was only with them, had to a great extent gone out of her. Nevertheless, her correspondence shows that she never lost her fine discernment of character. Some of her letters are still masterpieces of practical understanding.

For a short time still she lived quietly with the men and women who loved and made much of her, though had she for a second realized how subtly indulged she was, a panic of dismay would have shaken her strenuous spirit. Physical

strength, however, was almost exhausted. She suffered greatly, and with a touching foolishness —touching because of its presence in so much wisdom—she repeated again and again that God permitted demons to distress her, and, in consequence, bent her failing strength to wrestle with their torments. That a natural disease was killing her did not seem credible to imagination. Nevertheless, except during intolerable pain, her expression continued pathetically joyous. When she was well enough they carried her out into a neighbouring garden, lent for her use. Catherine never, after the first excesses of her childhood, repudiated out-of-door pleasures. She died in 1380, surrounded by a very passion of regret and tenderness. On her death-bed she confessed quaintly that in the early days of her spiritual career she had yearned for solitude, but that God would have none of it. Each creature possessed a cell in their own souls, where the spirit could live as solitarily and as enclosed in the world as out of it.

Stephen Marconi was with her when she died, and just before the end she entreated him to enter the Order of the Carthusians. Neri she begged to become a hermit. The injunction for a moment appears to lack her usual intuition.

Yet it was probably the result of a very deep understanding. Neri's nerves may have been more tranquil when not played upon by other people.

To the last she prayed, dying peacefully towards the "hour of Sext," one Sunday evening, according to Stephen, the body until her burial retained a wonderful beauty and fragrance.

Her last request to the latter was reverently complied with, and for the future he carried on, with the grace of nature that made him so lovable, the most endearing of his dead friend's labours—he became famous as a healer of feuds. The cult of Catherine's memory gave a sentimental happiness to his days. He remembered her with the painful delight of a faithful lover. Nothing in their companionship had been too trivial for a living recollection. Being elected Father Superior to his monastery, he "invariably added the delicacy of beans to the fare of his religious on Easter Day." He did this because one Easter Day he had dined with Catherine on beans, there having been nothing else in the house, and as Friar Bartholomew puts it, "the remembrance of that dinner stuck fast to the marrow of his spine." As an old man, Stephen still cherished the smallest details of her life, and on one occasion, at the

sudden recall of some little incident illustrative of her loving-kindness, he burst abruptly into tears, seeming as if his heart would break. The brothers were obliged to lead him gently to a seat out-of-doors, where a freshening wind restored him.

Neri also did as she wished. But his life as a hermit did not interfere with his literary labours, nor did it by any means leave him without society. Once he seems to have gone out of his mind for a time. Stephen mentions in one letter that he was told that he had been *alienato*, but that it is evident, since he had now heard from him, that he had recovered.

An account of his death, written by a monk to a certain friend of the dead man, Ser Jacome, and given in the English version in Miss Drane's life of Catherine, is sufficiently unusual to quote. It falls to the lot of few people to have their deaths recorded in quite such a superfluity of phrases.

"Dearest Father of Christ,

"My negligence—I need say no more—but yet with grief and sorrow I write to you, how our Father and our comfort, and our help, and our counsel, and our support, and our

refreshment, and our guide, and our master, and our receiver, and our preparer, and our writer, and our visitor, and he who thought for us, and our delight, and our only good, and our entertainer; and his meekness, and his holy life, and his holy conversation, and his holy teachings, and his holy works, and his holy words, and his holy investigations. Alas, miserable ones, alas poor wretches, alas orphans, where shall we go, to whom shall we have recourse? Alas, well may we lament, since all our good is departed from us! I will say no more, for I am not worthy to remember him, yet I beg of you that, as it is the will of God, you will not let yourself be misled by the news; know then alas, I don't know how I can tell you—alas, my dear Ser Jacomo, alas, my Father and my brother, I know not what to do, for I have lost all I cared for. I do not see you, and I know not how you are. Know then that our love and our father—alas, alas, Neri di Landoccio, alas, took sick on the 8th of March, Monday night, about daybreak, on account of the great cold, and the cough increasing, he could not get over it, alas. He passed out of his life, confessed, and with all the sacraments of the Holy Church, and on the 12th of March was buried by the brethren of Mount Olivet, outside

the Porta Tufi, and died in the morning at the Aurora at break of day."

According to the writer, Neri did not die until some hours after he had been buried at the Porta Tufi!

Catherine's influence lingered in almost all those who had once responded to it. But the quality that remains rousing to the present day was her unremitting remembrance that one cannot be good without being happy. Though due to a different source, the spirit of the Renaissance seemed to emanate from her—the spirit that laboured so hard, in a world rich in all manner of things, to be joyful every minute. In Catherine's case, it was the result, not only of a realization of life's inherent wondrousness, but of an unconscious knowledge that heroism is never anything but smiling; that the acceptance which is not absolute, composed, and tendered in fulness of heart, is but a semi-acceptance after all.

In addition, Catherine had the one supreme characteristic that no age can render less superb or less inspiring. She was a nature drenched in loving-kindness. Consciously and unconsciously love streamed out of her, penetrating and unifying every soul she came in contact with. At all

times there is nothing the world stands more in need of than loving saints,—at all times there is nothing that brings more creatures out of mistakenness, intractability, and mean-souled egoism than a glowing greatness of heart. And finally, there is nothing so vividly illuminating upon the intense and vital beauty of life and human efforts than the persons who, like Catherine, have but to enter a room, and,—satisfied, aflame, compassionate,—instantly transpose its atmosphere into delicious, renewing goodness.

BEATRICE D'ESTE

1475–1497

BEATRICE D'ESTE could never have been a beautiful woman, though most contemporary writers affirmed that she was. Neither was she particularly good; nevertheless, very few women of the Renaissance make anything like the same intimacy of appeal. Nothing in her life has become old-fashioned. She suggests no reflections peculiar merely to the time in which she lived. The drama of her domestic existence is so familiar and modern, that it might be the secret history of half the charming women of one's acquaintance.

At the same time she was vividly typical of the Renaissance. Nobody expressed more completely what the determined quest for beauty and joy could do. And as far as she was concerned it could do everything—except make a woman happy. Her life, in fact, is one of the most absorbing instances of the tragedy that lies

in wait for the majority of women after the pleasantness of youth is over.

Born at Ferrara on June 24, 1475, Beatrice was the younger sister of the great Isabella D'Este, who became one of the chief connoisseurs of the Renaissance. There is always some pain entailed in being the plainer sister of a beauty. Triumph also, in those days, was entirely for the precocious. Isabella embodied precocity itself. Though only a year older than Beatrice, she showed herself incomparably the more graceful, the more receptive, the more premature of the two. At six she had become the talk of the Ferrarese court circle. As a future woman was desired to do, she already showed signs of culture, of tact, of fascination. A pretty little prodigy, with hair like fine spun silk, her hand was constantly being asked for in marriage; and no visitor ever came to the court but Isabella was sent for to show off her premature accomplishments.

There is little said about Beatrice. A second girl had been so frankly unneeded that at her birth all public rejoicings were omitted. She passed her babyhood with her grandfather, the King of Naples, and when she came back, a round contented child, with a chubby face and

black hair, she served chiefly as a foil to Isabella, who was like some fine and dainty flower, with her pale soft hair and finished elegancies of behaviour. At Ferrara education had become a hobby. A son of the great Guarino, who with Vittorino da Feltre practically laid the foundations of modern schooling, had the chief control of their education. It was not a bad one, perhaps, save for its excess. These two mites were at lessons of some kind from the time they got up to the time they went to bed. Happily, the Renaissance was all for the open air, and a good deal of their education took place in the garden of a country villa belonging to the D'Estes. Petrarch's sonnets were among the lighter literature allowed them, and a good many of the sonnets were set to music especially for their thin incongruous voices. Guarino was their master for Cicero, Virgil, Roman and Greek history; other teachers took them in dancing, deportment, music, composition, and the rudiments of French. Isabella, indeed, is said to have spoken Latin as easily as her native tongue.

Though a little severe, Leonora was a capable and conscientious woman. Most of the qualities that Beatrice could have inherited from her mother would have been very good for temperament—

presence of mind, courage, intelligence, decision. The girl's light-heartedness she probably got from her Uncle Borso, Ercole's brother and predecessor, whose fat and smiling face Corsa's painting has made the very type of cruel joviality. Ercole was not jovial, and the chief characteristics he transmitted to his daughters were strong artistic and literary passions, a gift for diplomacy, and, perhaps, a little elasticity in the matter of conscience.

Culture pervaded the atmosphere at the court of Ferrara. And though Leonora saw to it that the children were strictly trained in religious observances, it was essentially life, and a full and engrossing life, that they were being prepared for. At six Isabella was already engaged to the future Duke of Mantua. Some time afterwards, Ludovico Sforza of Milan, uncle and regent for the young Duke Giangaleazzo, wrote and asked for her in marriage. He was not a person to refuse lightly. The real duke everybody knew to be foolish almost to the point of mental deficiency. Il Moro, as Ludovico was called, held the power of Milan, and politically an alliance with Milan would be good for Ferrara. Ercole answered the request by saying that his eldest daughter was already promised to Mantua,

but that he had another daughter a year younger, and if the King of Naples, who had adopted her, gave his consent, Ludovico could have her instead. The political value of the marriage remained the same, and Ludovico accepted without demur the little makeshift lady. Hence, at nine years old, Beatrice, as a substitute for her more elegant sister, became engaged to a man of twenty-nine. She was then still living with her grandfather at Naples. But when, in the following year, she returned to Ferrara, to be educated with Isabella, she was publicly recognized as Ludovico's future wife, and known as the Duchess of Bari, the title to be hers after marriage.

It was over this engagement that Beatrice was made acutely to realize the difference of life's ways with the plain and the bewitching. The young Marquis of Mantua soon became an ardent lover of his golden-haired lady. He wrote to her, he sent her presents; a slight but pretty love affair went on between the two during all the years of their engagement. And when in due course they were married, it was with every show of eagerness upon the side of the handsome bridegroom. Ludovico, on the other hand, took no notice whatever of the childish Beatrice; there was no interchange of winning courtesies, no

presents, no letters. Twice, when the marriage was definitely settled, Ludovico put it off; and on the second occasion, at any rate, no girl could avoid the sting of wounded vanity. Everybody had been eager to marry Isabella. Beatrice also, according to the notions of her time, was grown up, and far too clear-witted not to understand the gossip following upon Ludovico's second withdrawal. Unmistakably she was not wanted. Her future husband had his heart already filled. There was another woman in the case, and a woman loved with such intensity that Il Moro literally had not the courage to face marriage with a different lady. On the arrival of the ambassadors asking for a second delay, an agent of the court wrote that everybody was annoyed and the Duke of Ferrara extremely angry.

This was in April, 1495, and for several months Beatrice lived on quietly in the Castello at Ferrara. To deepen the dulness, not only Isabella, but her half-sister Lucrezia, was now married. Among the people of the court it was openly said that the marriage with Ludovico would probably not take place at all. Beatrice went back to lessons, music—she was all her life a great lover of music—and to needlework in the garden. But she probably felt fiercely

dispirited and without hope. Thankfulness for life itself cannot exist in youth. At fifteen it is not possible to thank God for just the length of time ahead. Most likely, also, she hated Ludovico. No girl of any spirit could have done otherwise, and Beatrice had more spirit than most.

Then, suddenly, in August, another ambassador arrived from Milan, and even then hopes began to float again. The ambassador had come this time with a present from the bridegroom to his betrothed. It was exquisite—a necklace of pearls made into flowers, with a pear-shaped pendant of rubies, pearls, and diamonds. The ambassador came also to fix a day for the wedding. Ludovico had at last made up his mind to the rupture with his mistress, Cecilia Gallerani, the rare and beautifully mannered woman, who has been compared, with Isabella D'Este and Vittoria Colonna, as among the most cultured women of the Renaissance.

Now, at last, Beatrice became brusquely a person of importance. The subject of Cecilia Gallerani was dropped like a burning cinder, and outwardly everything smoothed to a satin surface. There was more money than in the Mantuan marriage, and no expense was

consequently spared in Beatrice's trousseaux. Only Leonora still worried a little. Ludovico came of a bad stock—the only one among the family to show fine qualities had been the famous Francesco Sforza, founder of the dynasty.

As for the present duke's father, and Ludovico's brother, Galeazzo Maria, he had been a fiend, whose very soundness of mind was questionable. True, Ludovico's own ability was indubitable. The skill with which he had steered himself from exile into the regency could not be questioned. Moreover, though nominally only Regent, he had already commenced to drive in the thin end of the wedge of usurpation. The real duke was old enough to control his own state, and had recently been married to Isabella, daughter of the King of Naples. Notwithstanding this, the regency continued with a grasp tightened, rather than loosened, upon the affairs of Northern Italy. Meanwhile preparations for the marriage were rapid and luxurious, and as soon as possible, though it was then in the depth of winter, Beatrice and her suite started for the wedding. At Pavia Ludovico was waiting to receive them, and as soon as Beatrice had been helped on to a horse, wonderfully caparisoned for the occasion, the two rode slowly side by side from the water's

Alinari

THE BRIDGE AT PAVIA

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edge—she had come by boat up the Po—across the bridge that spans the river Ticino, and through the gates of the Castello of Pavia.

It would be interesting to know what lay in the minds of both. In the case of Ludovico one surmise has as much likelihood as another. He was a man much experienced in women, and to a person whose mistresses were always beautiful and interesting, Beatrice, at first sight, could have offered very small attractions. She had not the features to possess beauty of the finest quality. At the same time she was compensated by almost all the minor enticements. The smooth and delicate freshness of youth was fragrant in her, and, like Isabella, she was extremely graceful in body. But the chief attraction of her face sprang from its oddity, and the inner rogue it suggested. According to rigid canons she was plain, but her plainness was so near to prettiness that it was as often as not over the border.

The first impression given by her portrait in the Altar-piece, said to be Lemale's, is disappointing. From her personality the expectation is of something different—a little more distinguished, a little more wanton, and a little more incontestably seductive. But a mild fascination comes with familiarity. Waywardness and intelligence are

both in the face; the gift of humour is clear as day. Her expression radiates a mixture of sauciness and wisdom. In certain clothes and in certain moods she must have looked adorable, more especially before she was actually dressed, when her curls hung upon her shoulders.

What Beatrice thought of Ludovico is more easily hazarded. The man was handsome, and bore every sign of a personal force of character. His profile formed too straight a line, but in the general effect his features were impressive and masterful. Beatrice was fifteen, and as Isabella's plain sister had never yet been incensed with too much flattery. Ludovico had in fact reached at her child-like heart with unequal advantages; confronted by this suave and dignified person a girl's imagination had everything to feed upon.

They were married next morning, and a few days later Beatrice made her state entry into Milan—Ludovico, Giangaleazzo, the real duke, his wife Isabella, and every Milanese person of importance, meeting her at the gates. She and Ludovico then rode side by side in a procession through the town, the horses being decorated and the streets lined with people to cheer them as they passed.

But the really interesting incident of the day was

the meeting of the two girls, the reigning duchess and the duchess of the Regent. The situation pushed them into antagonism, and into mean and agitated rivalries. Isabella's was the position of easier righteousness, Beatrice's the one of more colossal temptations. Everything moreover in the future was to help them into unfairness. The wife of the futile duke was cringed to by nobody. All Milan cossetted and flattered the wife of the Regent who held the power, and suggested still greater power in the future. To have been meek and secondary would have required a temperament of great spiritual vitality. Beatrice came of a worldly family, and the reasons for not tethering ambition grew to be very specious. Giangaleazzo, as head of the State, was too clearly incapable. Il Moro did all the work, bore all the responsibility, and when necessary, all the execration. Why should an idle, dull-witted boy, who did nothing, enjoy the benefit of public precedence? Why should Beatrice and her husband walk humbly behind these two, whose importance was as a balloon inflated for the occasion?

Corio says that from the first days of her arrival in Milan, Beatrice chafed at yielding place to Isabella. But Corio, who wrote many

years after the death of Beatrice and Ludovico, was bent upon making the worst of them. And to contradict him there is a good deal of correspondence which goes to show that at the beginning the girls were glad enough to have each other for companionship. Some writers of the struggle between Beatrice and Isabella also urge that it was Beatrice who drove Ludovico to schemes of usurpation. This is one of the statements that are introduced in the heat of advocacy. Ludovico had made his mark as a dangerous personality years before he married Ercole's second daughter. The Ferrarese ambassador had written of him long before his marriage that he was a great man, who intended later on to make himself universally recognized as such.

The day before her state entry into Milan, Beatrice's brother Alphonso was married to the gentle Anna, who, after his death, was to be succeeded by the enigmatic Lucrezia Borgia. A week of public rejoicing followed, after which Leonora returned to Ferrara, and Beatrice commenced the routine of her new existence. But the reports of Ludovico, sent shortly afterwards, were pleasant reading for the girl's father.

The Ferrarese representative at the court of Milan wrote that Ludovico was incessantly

BEATRICE D'ESTE

BUST IN THE LOUVRE

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singing his wife's praises, and a few days later added that he was brimming over with admiration both for his wife and his sister-in-law, and that he reiterated incessantly the extreme delight their society gave him. Then, some time after the last of Beatrice's people had left, Trotti once more repeated that Ludovico appeared to have no thought but how to captivate and amuse his wife, and that every day he repeated how much he loved her.

Not only Trotti, but Pallissena D'Este, a cousin, and one of Beatrice's elder ladies-in-waiting, wrote enthusiastic accounts of the Milanese *ménage* at the commencement. Palissena's letter was to Isabella, and not to Beatrice's parents. She wrote that Beatrice was unceasingly made much of by her husband, and that every possible tender attention was paid to her by him. According to her accounts the two were delightful to see together, the man being evidently as delighted to spoil the pretty child, as the child was to be spoilt by him. And since Beatrice had been the plain member of the family, with uncertain prospects of future beauty, the writer mentions, with an evident sense of conveying good news, that in the new climate the girl had grown not only very much stronger, but very much better looking.

Beatrice was certainly very happy at this time—nothing in life compares with the first days of the first love affair—and Ludovico as a lover has already been insisted upon. Muratari, writing of her after the shyness of her arrival had worn off—she is mentioned as being timid at first—describes her as young and always occupied in dancing, singing, or in some kind of amusement. Muratari also touches upon one of Beatrice's weaknesses. Truly never was a woman more intelligently fond of dress. She came to Milan a child, but within a year she knew her woman's business like her alphabet, and of that, one of the serious items is to understand that a woman is most frequently rendered attractive by her clothes. In dress, Beatrice had one peculiar predeliction—she loved ribbons. She liked to have her sleeves tied with them; she liked them, in fact, almost everywhere. In the Altar-piece portrait her gown is extremely ugly, but little superfluous-looking ribbons are tied all over it. She also grew certainly to be extravagant. On one occasion, when her mother went over her country house, she was shown the Duchess of Bari's wardrobe. There were eighty-four gowns, pelisses, and mantles, besides many more that had been left in Milan. There is no doubt that eighty-four

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gowns and mantles were too many at one period. Beatrice grew over-rich for the finer qualities of character to keep exercised. To desire a thing, if only in passing, was to have it.

During the first months after her arrival in Milan, however, she was a child, and too much cossetted to realize more than a very limited responsibility. Her life for some time was little more than a perfect example of the winning freshness belonging to the Renaissance conception of happiness. Open-air pleasures were a large part of its delight. Every man who was rich enough had a country residence with shady places and pools of water. Beatrice constantly went picnics into the country. A certain Messer Galeazzo Sanseverino, who later married Ludovico's illegitimate daughter Beatrice, wrote a description of one of them. He said—it was in a letter to Isabella—that they started early in the mo[illegible]g, and as they drove—he, Beatrice, and an[illegible]er lady—they sang part-songs arranged for t[illegible]ee voices. Having arrived at their destinati[illegible]— Ludovico's country house at Cussago—they [illegible]n-mediately commenced fishing in the river, and caught so many fish that they were obliged to fling some back into the water. A portion of the rest was cooked for their midday meal, and

afterwards, the writer says, for the sake of their digestions, they played a vigorous game of ball. This finished, they made a tour over the beautiful palace, and after that once more started fishing. This might well have been occupation enough for one day, but when fishing had grown wearisome horses were saddled, and they first flew falcons by the river-side, and then started hunting the stags on the duke's estate. It was not until an hour after dark that the indefatigable and cheerful party got back to Milan.

When Rabelais wrote his description of a day in Pantagruel's life, he might well have had this pleasure outing in remembrance.

Ludovico took no part in these outings; affairs of state, he said, absorbed his time. To have instantly suspected these affairs of state would have needed the sharpened wits of worldly knowledge. But presently, since everybody but the bride knew or guessed from the beginning how the duke really occupied himself, comments began to circulate. In the end Beatrice realized the truth. There are no letters showing how she first grasped the fact that Ludovico still gave tenderness to another woman; but she knew at last that Cecilia Gallerani was not only shortly expecting to be confined, but was also still lodged

in apartments at one end of the Castello. The last fact in itself must have sufficed to be insufferable. Whether Beatrice made a scene or not, she could only have felt burnt up with anger as well as with sickness of heart. A crisis became inevitable. The particular motives were trivial, but the triviality occurred when anything would have been too much for her. Ludovico gave his wife a gown of woven gold. The moment she wore it curious expressions flickered over the faces of her household—Cecilia Gallerani was going about in its counterpart. Only one inference presented itself. Beatrice soon knew, and by this time had borne as much as the unseasoned endurance of her years was able. What followed is summarized in a letter by Trotti to the Duke of Ferrara—a letter which he begs the duke to burn immediately. Trotti speaks of the garment as a vest, showing that it was only part of a dress, and he says that Madonna Beatrice had refused to wear hers again if Madonna Cecilia was allowed to appear in another similar. The attitude was a bold one for a child of fifteen, and Beatrice must have made it with the most unhindered courage. For immediately afterwards Ludovico himself went to interview Trotti, and so make sure that something more soothing than a mere

statement of Beatrice's grievance went to Ferrara. He gave an actual promise that the liaison should come to a conclusion. He would either find a husband for the lady or send her into a nunnery.

Beatrice won, and, indeed, won handsomely. Political expediency was on her side, but the girl's own likeableness must be counted for something in the matter. Ludovico was among the most cunning men of Italy, yet upon this occasion he did exactly what he promised. As soon as Cecilia had recovered from the birth of a son the two alternatives were considered. Her tastes were not for convents, and she married a Count Ludovico Bergamini. With this, as far as Il Moro was concerned, the episode closed. Beatrice would probably have preferred the convent, for, as things remained, Cecilia was not in any sense removed out of society. She continued to receive all the notable men of that part of the world at the beautiful palace a little way out of Milan which Ludovico had given her as an inheritance for his son, and at all court functions she appeared as usual.

Beatrice's triumph may have come to her a little through her courage. It was a quality Ludovico admired above all things, though his own was not to be relied upon. Commines says

of him, "Ludovico was very wise, but extremely timid, and very slippery when he was afraid. I speak as one well acquainted with him, and who has arranged much diplomatic business with him."

Few characters of the Italian Renaissance are more difficult to get at than Ludovico's. Like Cæsar Borgia, he had much of the magnificent adventurer in his blood, and though he never cut the figure in Italy that Cæsar Borgia did, he was in many ways the more interesting of the two. Cæsar Borgia outshines him easily as a schemer, as a fighter, as a man nothing stopped and nothing staggered; but Cæsar Borgia was known as a being more eager to conquer towns than to govern them, and Il Moro was above all admirable at the head of a state. His politics were over-cunning, but as a ruler of Milan he went consistently for improvement and for more humanity than was customary. In personal charm he must have run the Borgia close. All those who knew him intimately liked him. There was dignity of presence and an eloquent habit of speech. Leonardo da Vinci could not be reckoned an easy man to satisfy, but he lived for sixteen years contentedly under the patronage of Ludovico. Ludovico's ambitions did not drive him at the same furious pace as the other's, and he worked

for a city and the future along with and in the interval of his own deep plots. A contemporary writer, Cagnola, says of him that he improved to an extraordinary degree the town of Milan, by enlarging and embellishing the streets and squares, and by the erection of many fine buildings, the fronts of which were decorated with frescoes. He did the same at Pavia, until both towns, previously hideous and filthy, were scarcely recognizable. Corio adduces further evidence in his favour by saying that every man of culture and learning, wherever he could be found, was enticed by Ludovico to Milan, and in some flowery phrases writes that all that was sweetest in music and finest in art and literature was to be found in the court of Il Moro.

This, put in plainer language, was very nearly true. Ludovico had a passion for having great men as company. His library, too, was famous. He collected books in France, Italy, and Germany. He had manuscripts printed, copied, illuminated wherever he could find them. In connection with this library, besides, a pleasant trait in his character comes out. He allowed scholars to borrow his books for purposes of study, and even gave facilities to them for using his library. The universities of both Milan and

Pavia were saved by his energy, and his attitude towards education was always generous and impersonal.

To a man so full of temperament Beatrice's own nature was very much in tune, and after the disposal of Cecilia Gallerani there came to her the really good time of her life. It seems more than probable, in fact, that Ludovico had already grown fond of the round-faced girl with the audacious expression and the inexhaustible vitality of ways. Some of her earlier escapades were like a schoolboy's home for the holidays, but Ludovico referred to them invariably with a touch of pride. He wrote on one occasion to Isabella that his wife, the Duchess of Milan, and their suites, had, at Beatrice's instigation, been dressing up in Turkish costumes. These dresses, also under Beatrice's impetuous influence, were finished in one night's labour. She herself sewed vigorously with the rest, and Ludovico wrote that upon the duchess expressing surprise at her energy, replied that she could do nothing without flinging her whole soul into it. That was like Beatrice; she had no impulses that were not glowing, tremendous, whole-hearted. Some of her nonsense at this time, nevertheless, was not so pleasing, though Ludovico does not appear to have realized its naughtiness. He

wrote on another occasion, and still with an air of pride, that one of her amusements in the country was to ride races with the ladies of her suite, when she would gallop full speed behind some of them in the hope of making them tumble off their excited horses.

Of Beatrice's pluck many instances are given, but at this time, undoubtedly, she was a little drunk with youth and happiness. Trotti wrote to Ferrara of a wrestling match between her and Isabella of Milan, in which Beatrice succeeded in throwing Isabella down. And the tirelessness of the creature came out also in a letter of her own to Isabella of Mantua, in which she told her sister how every day after their dinner she played ball with some of her courtiers. In the same letter there is another assurance that she was really happy, not only because she was young and vigorous, but because her heart was satisfied, for she mentions, as if it brimmed over spontaneously from a joy still fresh enough to be marvelled at, how tender her husband was to her. She added a pretty and affectionate touch by mentioning a bed of garlic which she had planted on purpose for her sister when she should come to stay with them, garlic being evidently a flavouring of which Isabella was extremely fond.

Beatrice's statement of Ludovico's affectionate habits is largely corroborated. Once, when she was ill, Trotti reported to Ferrara that Ludovico left her bedside neither night nor day, but spent his entire time trying to soothe and distract her.

As far as Beatrice was concerned, this illness could not consequently have been entirely lamentable. It is in the nature of women not to begrudge the price paid for visible assurances of being beloved, and to Beatrice Ludovico had soon become the integral requirement of life.

Some time after this the real duchess, Isabella, gave birth to a son. At last Giangaleazzo was not only duke, but possessed an heir to come after him. This child destroyed the Regent's prospects. Giangaleazzo, weak as well as foolish, had not the making of old bones in him. Until now the able and popular Regent stood with an easy grace, one day to be persuaded to step into his nephew's shoes. Isabella's son put girders to her house, and thrust Ludovico's future back to that of simple service, gilded and honourable, but yet, after all, merely service to the house of which he was not head. For Beatrice and Ludovico, moreover, this new-born infant tinged the situation either with flat mediocrity or with a new and secret ugliness. No change showed, however,

upon the surface. Public rejoicings took place to celebrate the birth of an heir, and life then fell back into its customary habits. There is a picture of these days given many years after by Beatrice's secretary, the *elegantissimo* Calmeta, as he was called at the time. He wrote that her court was filled with men of distinction, all of whom were expected to use their talents for her intellectual pleasure. When she had nothing else to do, a secretary read Dante or some minor poet out loud to her, on which occasions Ludovico would more often than not come and listen with her.

Calmeta mentions some of the men who made Beatrice's court remarkable, but the greatest of all, Leonardo da Vinci, is not included. From what it is possible to ascertain, Leonardo came very little into Beatrice's private existence. His life was enclosed by what Walter Pater calls "curiosity and the desire of beauty," and the passion for humanity was very slightly developed in him. He believed in solitude, and, in a limited and cordial fashion, indulged in it.

In reference to his coming to Milan, Pater, referring to the facts given by Vasari, says, "He came not as an artist at all, or careful of the fame of one; but as a player on the harp, a strange harp of silver of his own construction, shaped in

some curious likeness to a horse's skull. The capricious spirit of Ludovico was susceptible also to the power of music, and Leonardo's nature had a kind of spell in it. Fascination is always the word descriptive of him."

Leonardo's letter to Ludovico about his coming to Milan is written in a very different mood, and, read in the light of his fame, is wholly humorous. He says, "Having, most illustrious lord, seen and pondered over the experiments of all those who pass as masters in the art of constructing engines of war, and finding that their inventions are not one whit different from those already in use, I venture to ask for an opportunity of acquainting your excellency with some of my secrets.

"Firstly, I can build bridges, which are light and strong and easy to carry, so as to enable one to pursue and rout the enemy; also others of a stouter make, which, while resisting fire and assault, are easily taken to pieces and placed in position. I can also burn and destroy those of the enemy.

"Secondly, in times of siege I can cut off the water supply from the trenches, and make pontoons and scaling ladders and other contrivances of a like nature."

Seven other paragraphs follow, explaining contrivances for ensuring success in warfare by land or sea. It was only at the end of the tenth that he touched upon less military matters. Then he wrote: "In times of peace, I believe that I could please you as completely as any one, both in the designing of public and private buildings, and in making aqueducts. In addition, I can undertake sculpture in marble, bronze, or clay. In painting I am as competent as any one else, whoever he may be. Moreover, I would execute the commission of the bronze horse, and so give immortal fame and honour to the glorious memory of your father and the illustrious house of Sforza."

Leonardo had painted Cecilia Gallerani for Ludovico before the time of Beatrice's arrival, but, as far as one knows, never painted Beatrice. Mrs. Cartwright suggests, and the opinion has been repeated elsewhere, that the reason for this sprang from Beatrice's jealousy of the beautiful woman who had preceded her. But this is not in keeping with her nature. Beatrice loved all beautiful pictures, and was far too intuitive not to know that if any one could give her portrait beauty, Leonardo was that man. Whatever strangeness exhaled from within he would have drawn upon the surface. That he should never

have painted her is extraordinary, but, at the same time, it is absolutely certain that he would never have felt any inclination to. Leonardo did not care for any woman's face that could look happy and be satisfied with that mere possession. And the Regent's wife had no withholdings in her expression, and no subtleties, save perhaps the subtlety of audacity and laughter.

Presently Beatrice gave birth to a son, and whatever sinister thoughts had ebbed and flowed in Ludovico's brain before, now became permanent and concrete. Beatrice's confinement was in itself the first open threat at Isabella. The arrangements for the child's arrival were a menace in their unfitness. A queen's son could not have been received into the world with more elaborate ceremony. The layette and cradle were exhibited to ambassadors as if a future monarch were being waited for. The cradle was of gold, its coverlet of cloth of gold. With no restraint as to cost, three rooms had been decorated—one for the mother, one for the child, and one for the presents, which poured in every hour. The boy was no sooner born than public rejoicings were ordered. Bells were rung for six days, processions were held, prisoners for debt were released, and ambassadors,

councillors, and all important officials entered to congratulate the slender girl in her magnificent bed, with its mulberry and gold coloured hangings.

At the court of Giangaleazzo meanwhile Isabella must have felt as if bitterness stifled her —bitterness and the sick despair of any creature conscious suddenly that it is trapped. Everybody remembered that when the real heir to the duchy had been born two years before, there had been less extravagance and formality than for the entry of the Regent's infant. And when a week later Isabella also went to bed and brought a second child into the world, the torture of the body must have been little in comparison to the torture of the mind that knew its children already marked out for disinheritance. Even her confinement became a convenience to Ludovico, who was able to inform the ambassadors that the rejoicings were for a double joy, though the statement was not made with any intention to deceive. The thin end of the wedge had been driven in, and Ludovico desired men to grow prepared and seasoned for what would one day be thrust upon them as an accomplished policy.

When both duchesses had recovered, ceremonies of thanksgiving were organized. They drove together in wonderful clothes and as part

of a gorgeous procession to the church of St. Maria della Grazie. Beatrice may have uttered some light gratitude as she knelt, but to Isabella the day must have been a burning anguish, wearying to the very fibre of her nature. She and Beatrice sat side by side, and their dresses were almost equally extravagant. The public only saw two bejewelled and magnificent figures, but one of the two women already hated the other, with a heart swollen by the wrongs she did not dare to utter.

From this day forward Isabella's life is ill to think of; for Ludovico's plans were soon no longer secret. The King of the Romans was to marry his niece—Giangaleazzo's sister—and to receive with her an immense dowry. In return he was to give Ludovico the investiture of Milan. On paper this change of dukes did not read as a flagrant usurpation. Giangaleazzo had been cleverly thrust into the position of sinner. It was seemingly abruptly discovered that he had no right to the dukedom at all without the consent of Maximilian. The viscontis held it in fief from the empire. When they died it should have passed back into the keeping of Germany. The duchy belonged to the emperor, and the Sforzas holding it on their own authority made

them nothing less than adventurers. Il Moro, confirmed as duke by the King of the Romans, would possess the duchy upon legal and unimpeachable grounds, and have only dispossessed therefore a creature without any rights to hold it at any time, and incapable into the bargain.

Isabella fought with an impassioned fury for her child and her position. It was brave, heart-rending, and useless. Giangaleazzo could not be made even to understand Ludovico's treachery. In a fit of temper he could beat his wife, as a child strikes what offends it. But he could not grasp any more than a child that a person, who had never given it an unkind word, should nevertheless intend to do it evil. Sometimes driven beyond control, Isabella would fix the story of Ludovico's coming usurpation into his wandering attention. For a moment her burning phrases stimulated some dim perception. But presently Ludovico and the boy would meet, and Giangaleazzo, in reality bewildered and helpless without the support of this capable, pleasant relative he had leant on since infancy, would blurt out all his wife's accusations and come back to her soothed into the implicit faith of before. Not a soul that would, had the capacity to help her, whilst the crowd had gone over to the

light-hearted, triumphant duchess who was stepping remorselessly into her place.

Of all the women of the Renaissance there are none more piteous and more innocently forlorn than this girl Isabella, married to the futile son of a madman and pitted against the unrighteous cravings of a Ludovico. He and Beatrice between them made her life a nightmare, but they never abased her courage. The letter to her father, given by Corio as hers, but generally looked upon as worded by the historian, shows the noble fierceness that ran through her body. In burning phrases she laid bare the unjust misery of her position. Giangaleazzo was of age, and should have succeeded some time back to the duchy of his father. But so far was this from being the case that even the bare necessities of existence were doled out to them by Ludovico, who not only enjoyed all political power, but who kept them practically both helpless and unbefriended. The bitter hurt she endured through Beatrice came out in the mention of the latter's son and the royal honours paid to him at birth, while she and her children were treated as of no importance. In truth she added—and there is something so hot, so passionately and recklessly sincere in the whole letter that it is difficult to

believe that anybody but Isabella herself wrote it —they remained at the palace in actual risk of their lives, the deadly envy of Ludovico aching to make her a widow. But her letter, for all its despair and anger, was imbued with an unbreakable spirit. When she had laid bare the danger, the loneliness, and humiliation of her position, explaining that she lacked even one soul she dared speak openly to, since all her attendants were provided by Ludovico, she closed with a brave and defiant statement that in spite of everything her courage still endured unshaken.

Beatrice, it is true, does not show bravely in this one matter. True, from the worldly standpoint of the time, it was not as ugly as it seems to-day. Position during the Renaissance was legitimately to those indomitable enough to seize it. But the private intuitions of the heart do not alter greatly at any period, and in these Beatrice was not by nature deficient. She had strong affections and abundant fundamental graces of temperament—laughter, courage, insight, wholeheartedness, multiplicity of talents. But during the first years of her married life she had too many happinesses at once. There was nothing in her life to quicken the spiritual qualities, nor to foster the more delicate undergrowths of character—pity,

compassion, the living sense of other sorrows. She lived too quickly, and there was no time for conscience to hurt her. That she could be tender there are little incidents to bear witness. Her motherhood, for instance, was both charming and childlike. She wrote to her mother, in sending the baby's portrait, that though it was only a week since the picture had been painted, the baby was already bigger, but that she dared not send his exact height because everybody told her that if she measured him he would never grow properly.

The innocent foolishness of this disarms harsh judgment. And in judging Beatrice's relations to Isabella of Milan there is no need to deduce a bad disposition from one bad action. No individuality stands clear from some occasional unworthinesses. In this one matter Beatrice was inexcusable, heartless, driven by nothing but an unjust ambition. But in others she was charming, affectionate, thoughtful, and moreover, under circumstances of colossal temptations and a great deal too much wealth, she remained a devoted wife, a faithful friend, and a woman capable in the end of a sorrow deep enough, practically, to kill her. In addition, it was harder for Beatrice than for most people to be really very saintly. She had too much of everything—vitality, intelligence, charm

of person—and the call of life in consequence became too loud and too insistent. It is partly because of this that one loves her. For she had enough grace to be lovable, but not enough to be above the need of a regretful compassion and understanding. It is, of course, possible to be extraordinarily robust—to feel life *sing* in one's body through sheer physical well-being—and yet be all aflame in spirit also. But it is certain that when for a woman considerable personal fascination is added, this extreme vitality makes it much harder to retain only a sweet and limpid thinking. Each actual moment becomes too engrossing and sufficient.

There is, of course, no use in denying that from the time Ludovico was immersed in disreputable politics, Beatrice knew a great deal about them. To help, in fact, in their fulfilment she was herself presently sent as envoy to Venice. The Venetians were reluctant to fit in with Il Moro's intentions, and it was realized at Milan that what may be lost by argument may be won by unuttered persuasion. In any case, a pretty woman, all gaiety, tact, and responsiveness, could only be a pleasant incident for a party of elderly gentlemen. So Beatrice, with all the clothes that most became her, went to Venice, where she set

the teeth of the women on edge with the wicked excess of her personal splendour. But though the feminine society of Venice did not love her, Beatrice knew that her business was with men, and that to fascinate, therefore, she must give out the charm the eye perceives immediately.

During her visit she wrote long letters to her husband, telling him everything save the information not wise to trust on paper. She even gave a description of the clothes she wore on each occasion. The fact is interesting, because nothing could constitute a clearer revelation of the closeness of their married relationship. Only when a husband and wife are on the tenderest terms of comradeship does a man care to hear what his wife wears, and even then he must possess what might be called the talent for domesticity.

The wedding of Bianca, sister of Giangaleazzo, became the next step in Ludovico's policy. It was during the pageants organized to show the greatness of the match that the Duchess Isabella made her last brave show in public. She knew exactly what lay at the back of the marriage, but maintained to the end the fine endurance of good breeding. Through all the ceremonies that preceded Bianca's departure into Germany, Isabella outwardly bore herself as any tranquil-hearted

woman, who was the first lady of Milan, should do. Later on, some at least of the anguish surging within was to overflow in a sudden torrent. But in public nothing broke her wonderful composure. Not until Charles VIII. came to see her privately did her accumulated sorrows openly express themselves.

Previously to this Louis XII., then Duke of Orleans, had been sent into Italy, to discuss plans with Ludovico. Nobody thought much then of the man who was later to destroy Il Moro. A contemporary wrote sneeringly that his head was too small to hold much in the way of brains, and that Ludovico would find it easy enough to outwit him. Charles followed, when Beatrice and her court journeyed from Milan to Asti in order to fascinate and amuse him. Beatrice even danced for his pleasure, and she was an exquisite dancer. As a result Charles metaphorically fell at her pretty feet, which was only natural, considering that her appearance must have been gay and young enough—in a dress of vivid green and with a bewildering blaze of jewels—to have fascinated anybody.

Coming after a duchess all radiance and light-heartedness, Isabella, on the other hand, empty of everything but desolation, could only appear

a disagreeable interlude. Giangaleazzo was already ill at Pavia when Charles VIII. crossed into Italy, but after Ludovico and Beatrice had done everything possible to amuse the French king, he passed on to the town of Pavia. Here the real duke lay in bed, and it was Isabella who received the king and Ludovico at the entrance to the Castello, dramatically beautiful in her forlorn observance of social obligations. Commines gives a detailed account of Isabella's sudden outcry against the downfall being prepared for her house. In this account he says that the king told him that he would like to have warned Giangaleazzo had he not feared the consequences with Ludovico. Commines adds that, disregarding the Duke of Bari's presence, Isabella threw herself on her knees before the French king, and piteously besought him to have pity on her father and brother, in answer to which, the situation being a very awkward one for him, he could only beg her to think of her husband and herself, she being still so young and lovely a woman.

That Charles pitied these two, as lambs lying in the paws of a wolf, is very clear from Commines' statement.

And a few days later Giangaleazzo died. His

life had been useless, but he took leave of it with an arresting gentleness. After a serious illness he had rallied, taken a fair amount of nourishment, and slept a little. That same evening he asked to see two horses Ludovico had sent him, and they were brought into the great stone hall, out of which his room opened. He talked of Ludovico, his confidence remaining childlike and unshaken to the end. His uncle, he said, would have been sure, would he not, to come and see him, if the French business had not swallowed up attention? As he grew weaker, he asked his favourite attendant—much as a woman might ask about her lover, for the pleasure of the answer—if he thought his uncle loved him, and grieved at his serious illness. Satisfied, he begged to see his greyhounds, and then, all his little interests tranquillized, quietly fell asleep. He was dead next morning, and Ludovico's path was made easier than before. He was, in fact, instantly proclaimed head of Milan. Guicciardini says of it, "It was proposed by the heads of the council that, considering the importance of the duchy, and the dangerous times dawning for Italy, it would be extremely undesirable that a child not yet five years old should succeed his father. . . . Ambition getting the better of honesty, the next

PORTRAIT,—PROBABLY OF CECILIA GALLERANI

SAID TO BE BY AMBROGIO DA PREDIS

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morning, after some pretence of reluctance, he accepted the name and arms of the Duke of Milan."

At the time Ludovico was almost universally credited with having murdered Giangaleazzo, but the accusation has since fallen to the ground. Practically it was based upon the fact that the moment of the duke's passing was too opportune to wear an air of naturalness. In spite, moreover, of what men thought, nothing dared be uttered openly, and Ludovico, blazing in cloth of gold, rode to the church of St. Ambrozio to give public thanks for his accession. The wind was with him for the moment. Beatrice, too, had become the first lady of Milan, and her soul stood in a more perilous state than ever. She had reached the place of her desire by ways too shady for loveliness of thought to have had much hold in her.

Isabella meanwhile, from this time onwards, passes into a desolate private existence. But there is an incident which occurred first that remains very difficult to penetrate. Literally at Ludovico's mercy after her husband's death, she still bore herself bravely. For a time she refused to leave Pavia. When she did, we are told that Beatrice drove out to meet her, and that when they came together, some two miles

from town, she got out of her own carriage and entered Isabella's, both women sobbing bitterly as she did so. That Isabella should cry was natural; she was weak with the weariness of sorrow. But Beatrice's was not the nature to weep either easily or falsely. Clearly face to face with the price paid for her own position, it beat back upon her for a moment as an utter heaviness, and she cried because Isabella was the living expression of despair, and they had once been intimate and companionable. God knows what they said to each other in this drive together, or whether through the passing grace of a sudden penitence Beatrice found anything the widow could hear without a sense of nausea. For how dire Isabella felt her life to have become is revealed in a singularly tender reference made to her by the court jester Barone, who wrote that she was so changed, and so thin and grief-stricken, that the hardest heart could not have seen her without compassion.

But the Duchy of Milan was to yield little happiness to the two who had acquired it so shabbily. Charles' Italian campaign soon thrust Ludovico into both difficulty and danger. At the commencement of it he had been a great man. But when one Italian town after another

became as a doormat for Charles to walk over, he perceived suddenly the flaw in his French invasion policy. Ferrante of Naples wrecked was one thing; Italy given over to Charles VIII. another.

He was not even personally safe with Louis of Orleans at Asti. A league was formed, in which the Pope, the King of the Romans, the King and Queen of Spain, Henry VII. of England, the Signory of Venice, and the Duke of Milan all combined. Isabella D'Este's husband was made captain, with the express duty of cutting off Charles' triumphant return into France. This fight against the king, so cajoled at the beginning, and the subsequent peace patched up between him and Ludovico, is purely a matter of history. In the attack against Asti, made by Louis of Orleans, however, Beatrice showed a magnificent and practical courage. Ludovico's own astuteness had died in a sickly terror, and he had rushed back to his fortified castle at Milan. At the time there is little doubt that he was suffering from nervous exhaustion; but it was Beatrice whose courageous eloquence roused Milan, and it was Beatrice who ordered the steps necessary to defend the town and Castello.

It was about this time, also, that she showed a disarming and warm-hearted rightness of feeling. Among the booty her sister Isabella's husband, Francesco, had acquired from the French were some hangings that had belonged to Charles VIII.'s own tent. They were originally forwarded to Isabella, but presently Francesco asked her to send them back, as he wished to give them to Beatrice. That made Isabella angry. She had some degree of reason, but her expression of it was repellantly ungracious. The hangings, notwithstanding, were sent to Beatrice. Happily, she would not have them. As keenly as Isabella, she loved beautiful and notable things, but with the simple statement that, under the circumstances she felt she ought not to have them, she returned the draperies to her sister. In doing so she was beginning to practise the little niceties that help to keep existence lovable. Had she lived, she would almost surely have weathered the over-eager selfishnesses of her married life. They were after all largely due to the absorption that all youth suffers during the first unsettled, uncertain period, when life is still all newness and personal excitements. But her time was short, and after the settling of peace with France, the end drew horribly near to her.

of pain, not in the present, but for the future. Small wonder she drew Ludovico. To be young, beautiful—a sweet wonder to look at—and, in addition, to strain at men's heartstrings by just a hint of wistfulness, is to be dangerous beyond bearing.

Ludovico's admiration became rapidly unmistakable. From being constantly pin-pricked, Beatrice saw the friendship between the two spring suddenly into something mortal to her heart. The two were thrown hourly into each other's society—the man with the inflammable response to beauty, and the girl with the discreet and tantalizing loveliness. It was a tense drama of three. For Beatrice was always there as the tortured third. From the commencement nothing was spared her. Each day some new incident shook her with unutterable anticipations. Slowly existence, as she watched these two, became a solidifying terror. There must have been some scenes at the commencement. No woman could accept a crisis such as this and not cry out for mercy. But Beatrice, with the innate wisdom that so soon grew strong in her, quickly realized that to plead was like a voice trying to be heard above a tempest. Ludovico was infatuated. Everybody knew, and talked of the affair, both

at the Court of Milan and beyond it. In 1496, a Ferrarese ambassador wrote that the latest news from Milan was the duke's infatuation for one of his wife's ladies-in-waiting, with whom he passed the greater part of his time—a fact which was widely condemned there.

That same autumn Ludovico's natural daughter, whom Beatrice had adopted when she came to Milan, and whom she loved dearly, died. Only a few months back she had been married to the Galeazzo di Sanseverino, who had helped so largely to keep Beatrice merry in the first months of her marriage. Her name was Bianca, and in her portrait by Ambrogio da Predis—a portrait sometimes said to be of Beatrice D'Este—she looks adorable. Her death struck Beatrice when she was already heartsick. A dozen times between daylight and bedtime Lucrezia and Ludovico had acquired the power to drive the blood to her temples. Muralto, who mentions Il Moro making the girl his mistress, says, with the simplicity characteristic of the period when touching anything emotional, that though it caused Beatrice bitter anguish of mind, it could not alter her love for him. It is very evident that Beatrice dared nothing against this later mistress. With an admirable wisdom

PROBABLE PORTRAIT OF BIANCA SFORZA

WIFE OF GALEAZZO SANSEVERINO

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—the wisdom of an intelligence which had deepened upon the facts of experience—she did not struggle, after five years of married life, against the fever of this tempestuous passion. But a passionate restlessness wore her out. She looked upon days unending and unbearable. In a few weeks her manner changed entirely. She, who had been like an embodied joy for years, grew to have tears always near the surface. In the end she became too weary to control them; for there is no weakness like that brought about by a forlornness constantly goaded into fresh sensations. Both her ladies and her courtiers, in the inevitable publicity of court habits, saw her eyes frequently blinded by silent tears. But she said nothing, and they could not be certain whether they fell because of her husband's conduct or because of the death of Bianca.

To some extent she had become abruptly absorbed by a new outlook. All her life previously she had been a frank materialist; the question of death had loomed too distant to need attention. But suddenly life had betrayed her, and in the bitter knowledge of its cruelties the soul stirred to tragic wakefulness.

The Renaissance, as far as she was concerned, had shown itself inadequate. It had promised,

with artistic and philosophic culture, to bring happiness. But in practice it provided nothing for the heart of women. It could not make men faithful, nor help the warm and simple ways of domesticity from the denudations of instability. There remained only the question of the after-life to fall back upon, and Beatrice, enfevered and tortured, tried to fix her mind upon this prospect. Bianca had been buried in the church of St. Maria delle Grazie, and during the last months of her existence Beatrice formed the habit of going constantly to her tomb, and of staying there for hours at a time. In fact, shipwrecked as far as life was concerned, and brought by her approaching motherhood to the nearness and possibility of death, her soul sprung at last into a quivering alertness, drawing her to silent introspections in the dark and restful church, where the girl who had been alive a short time back, now lay quietly buried. Only the most unshaken agnostics can come close to death and not suddenly feel an overwhelming necessity for some preparatory equipment—some consciousness of a clean and justified existence. And Beatrice, whose manner hinted to those about her the possession of a secret foreboding of what was coming, had reached very close to the moment when this peace, both of

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remembrance and of hope, would be tragically necessary.

On January 2, 1497, she drove as usual to the church of St. Maria delle Grazie. She remained there for hours, as if only in this one sombre place could she obtain a little respite and tranquillity. Her ladies—who probably disliked these outings beyond expression—had difficulty in coaxing her at last from the building. They got her home, and she seemed much as usual until about eight o'clock in the evening, when the agony of child-birth suddenly commenced in her.

Her pains only lasted three hours. Then she gave birth to a still-born child, and shortly after midnight she died. For a short hour she lay in her canopied bed, worn in body and uncomforted in soul. Then she died, and whom Ludovico loved or did not love mattered not one whit to her.

But her death had been brutal, unexpected, sudden, and acted upon Ludovico like a douche of icy water. Passion for Lucrezia died brusquely through the shock. Beatrice, had she known it, had never been profoundly discarded, and the thought of life without her had not formed part of the Lucrezia madness.

And suddenly she was dead. There had been

no reconciliation. In the abruptness of her collapse, there had not been an interval in which to endear her back to joy. She had suffered great pain, and then, in a forlorn and piteous weakness, passed from existence.

Ludovico's grief became intense. His passionate prostration was so unusual in the callousness of the period, that every one talked about it. He refused to have her name mentioned in his presence, and when most widowers of that time would have been thinking of a second wife, he was still spoken of as caring nothing any longer for his children, or his state, or for anything on earth.

Seven months after her death he continued still apparently a changed man. He had become religious, recited daily offices, observed fasts, and lived "chastily and devoutly." His rooms were still draped in black, he took all his meals standing, and every day went for a time to his wife's tomb in the church of St. Maria delle Grazie.

His last action in connection with Beatrice has a certain moving sentimentality. It was when the miserable end of his adventure had commenced, and he was obliged to escape from Milan with all the haste he could. His safety depended upon his swiftness. Knowing this, he

nevertheless stopped at the church of St. Maria delle Grazie, and stayed so long by the tomb of his wife that the small group with him became anxious for their own skins as well as his. He came out at last with the tears streaming down his face, and three times, as he rode away, he looked back towards the church, as if all his heart held dear lay there behind him.

Not long afterwards he was captured, and his captivity at Loches is one of the few inexcusable stains upon Louis XII.'s character.

ANNE OF BRITTANY

1476–1514

WITH Anne of Brittany the Renaissance entered France. She herself, though she had her little fastidiousnesses, hardly belongs to it. No artistic strain ran through her temperament. She was an intelligent, but excessively practical woman, who twice married men of opposite dispositions from her own. Anne, it is certain, never glowed at the thought of a beautiful thing in her life, but both her husbands did, and both, as a result of their Italian campaigns, brought into France a variety of new and educative lovelinesses. Charles VIII., Anne's first husband, and Louis XII., her second, gave the primary impulse to the Renaissance movement in France.

As for Anne herself, though in the end she appeals through a colossal weight of sorrow, one feels her chiefly as a warning. Almost every quality a woman ought to spend her strength in avoiding, she hugged unconsciously to her soul,

and every quality a woman needs as the basis of her personality, she had not got. A woman should be indulgence itself, and Anne indulged nobody; a woman should be as a brimming receptacle of sympathy, toleration, and forgiveness, and Anne forgave no one, and tolerated nothing that went against her. A woman should be—it is without exaggeration her great essential—good to live with, cosy, accommodating, an insidious wheedler, almost without premeditation, not only into happiness, but into righteousness of living. Now, Anne could never have been cosy, and it is doubtful whether, once safely married for the second time, she would have condescended to wheedle any one. She had not sufficient love to have a surplus for distribution. Duties of some kinds she could observe excellently, but there was no sub-conscious sense that in marrying she was accepting one of the subtlest posts of influence in the world. She had not the capacity for understanding that it is a woman's adorable privilege to be *in herself* so much, that the atmosphere of the house she controls must in the end express principally her personality. And nothing was more remote from Anne's intelligence than the secret triumph of realizing how greatly the building up of character is the charge intrusted to her sex by destiny.

It was not her gift to make any house feel warmer when she entered it. Her second husband loved her—contrast is a frequent motive for falling in love—but she could do nothing for temperament. Character is not upheaved by violences, and Anne was all imperatives and despotism. Practical organizations are often admirably conducted with these methods, and as a housewife Anne attained considerable proficiency; but the more immaterial achievements are beyond the reaching power of a chill autocracy.

Born in 1476, she was the daughter of Francis II. of Brittany, enemy of Louis XI. of France. Her mother, Marguerite de Foix, died when she was little more than a baby, and the first thing one hears about the child Anne was, as usual, concerned with the question of marriage. At eight years old more than one suitor already desired her hand. The English Prince of Wales had been accepted, when his murder put an end to the engagement. Then the widowed Archduke of Austria, Maximilian, was seriously considered, and for a short time Louis, Duke of Orleans, subsequently her second husband, numbered among those said to be possibly acceptable. He was married already to Jeanne,

daughter of Louis XI., but his dislike to the woman forced upon him by her sinister parent had never been disguised. A dispensation from the Pope could at any time make another marriage possible.

The notion did not hold attention long, but the man and the child, after all one day to come together, were excellent friends during the period when Anne was in the schoolroom. Louis of Orleans, restless and discontented, could bear anything better than the presence of his own wife. Jeanne, who was not only deformed but hideous, had wrung from her own father on one occasion the remark, "I did not know she was so ugly." Curtained behind physical ungainliness, her nature was white as snow and soft as the breast of a bird; but though every thought that came to her fused into tenderness, she lacked the common gaieties needful for ordinary existence. She had wanted to be a nun, and instead they made her the wife of a boy who felt for her nothing but an uncontrollable physical repulsion.

Louis, when he fled to Brittany, did not take her with him, and every writer is agreed that the pretty, precocious child whom he found there, and the dissatisfied husband, became the best of comrades. One chronicler mentions that Anne

was flattered by the *hommage* paid to her by Louis, but it is very much in keeping with his character to have been amused by a little creature with all the airs and graces, and all the feminine obstreperousnesses, that Jeanne did not possess. Louis admired character, and even at nine years old Anne must have required no trifling efforts to manage.

In 1488, her father, worsted at last by the French, was obliged to come to terms with them. Almost immediately afterwards he died, and Anne, at twelve years old, became Duchess of Brittany.

It was, under the circumstances, a tragic position for any child to be placed in, and Anne's little baby face and thin childish voice, at the head of so forlornly placed a duchy, becomes suddenly pathetic. She was no sooner proclaimed her father's successor, moreover, than France sent to state that, since there were differences of opinion concerning their respective rights to Brittany, she should, pending the decision of arbitrators, not take the title of duchess. The reply—firm but cautious—amounted to the statement that Anne had already convoked the states of Brittany, in order to have the recent treaty made by her father with France ratified.

This answer the child probably had nothing to do with, but, in the vital question of her marriage, she suddenly revealed herself very definitely the authoritative head of her own dominions. All her ministers desired a marriage with the Comte D'Albret, thought to be in a position to help Brittany against the claws of its enemy. D'Albret was a widower, old, ugly, bad tempered, and the father of twelve children. Anne hated him—he is said to have had a spotty face—and the shrinking antipathy of children is not controllable by reasons. Primarily she must have felt a little frightened when both her governess, and the great bearded men who controlled affairs, informed her that, whatever her feelings, the marriage must take place. Happily, she was not timid, and she understood perfectly that she had succeeded to the power of her father. She refused point-blank to marry D'Albret. They argued, coaxed, laboured with interminable explanations, but the girl merely became mulish. When their importunities allowed no other outlet, she declared that sooner than marry him she would enter a nunnery and become a nun. Obstinacy such as this, when the child owed subjection to nobody, was a thing to gasp at. The tempers of her ministers must have been

sorely tested, but the D'Albret marriage had in the end to be abandoned.

Maximilian was then brought forward once more—a suitor towards whom Anne appears to have been more tractable. It was necessary to marry somebody. Maximilian she had never seen, and therefore could regard to some extent optimistically. At the worst he would be better than D'Albret, and there was the chance that he might be actually charming. Once she had consented they gave her no time to change her mind. Maximilian sent his favourite, Baron de Polhain, to Brittany, and a marriage by proxy, according to the German fashion, took place there. The bride, having been dressed in her best frock, was placed in her canopied bed, with the best pillows at her head, and the best counterpane over her small person, and in the presence of the necessary witnesses, Polhain bared one leg to the knee and introduced it into the bed. This brief and simple ceremony rendered Anne a married woman, wife of the King of Germany. For a year afterwards in all proclamations she was called Queen, and Maximilian Duke, of Brittany.

Had he been rich, Maximilian might have kept his wife and changed history. He was, however, too poor to send assistance, and France

inordinately wanted Brittany. Anne's position, therefore, grew month by month more desperate, until, after the town of Nantes had fallen, ultimate defeat became inevitable. Brittany, unaided, was a pigmy standing up to a colossus. What facts the little duchess's childish mind grew to understand during the two years she ruled in Brittany are hard to imagine. Every night her people put her to bed knowing that the enemy crept, hour by hour, nearer to her person. Every morning fresh perplexities of state were tumbled into her strained, embittered understanding. She learnt by heart the cheerless vicissitudes of life before she knew its kindling compensations. And by nature Anne was proud, obstinate, prematurely intelligent. This little thing was no dazed creature propped up as a mere figure-head of state by powerful officials. No one knew better than Anne the value of her own position. If she cried when the lugubriousness of her household grew more patent, she cried, not from terror, but from the bitter knowledge of utter powerlessness. The mere thought of being conquered roused a tempest in the fiery spirit of the child-duchess.

She was fourteen when a compromise saved her. Charles VIII., to settle matters more

securely than could be done by any temporary conquest, proposed to marry his past antagonist. When the proposal was first laid before her, Anne naturally refused with a sickened fury and vehemence. No extremity should drive her to think submissively of the man whose ambition had been the bane of her short existence. She argued, moreover, that she was already the wife of King Maximilian of Germany. But Brittany was in sore distress, and once more all those with power to persuade urged her to consider this proposal as a godsend to her country. She would not listen; every nerve in her body revolted against this man, whose very proposal carried a threat behind it. Finally a priest was called upon to help the troubled counsellor, and the poor girl, whose happiness throughout had been the one thing nobody considered, was informed that the Holy Church demanded this sacrifice for the welfare of her people. She gave in then; there remained no alternative open to her. An interview took place, when the enemies of yesterday fumbled with reluctant courtesies. Three days later they were betrothed, the Duke of Orleans being among the witnesses of the ceremony.

Anne at this time was, it is said, a pretty,

fresh-looking girl, with an admirable carriage, for all that one leg was slightly shorter than the other. Charles VIII., on the other hand, could hardly have been uglier. His head was too big for his body, his eyes were prominent and expressionless, his lips flabby. There was nothing in his lethargic appearance to disarm Anne's sullen misery, and during their first poignant meeting one can feel with certainty that she did nothing to render easier the polite apologies stammered out by the uneasy lover. But Charles's manner was gentleness and simplicity itself. Even Commines, who considered him futile and childish, says of it, "No man was ever more gentle and kindly in speech. Truly I think he never in his life said a thing to hurt any one; small of body and ill-made, but so good, a better creature it would be impossible to find."

The marriage once accomplished, Anne and her husband started upon a triumphal journey through Brittany. The marriage had been a brutal necessity, and, for all her determination, the girl of fourteen was in it only the tool of the men and women who called themselves her subjects. But once married, Charles showed the utmost tactfulness. In the "History of the Dukes of Brittany" we read, "The king, having against

his will, as it were, become her husband, omitted nothing that could assuage the unhappiness their marriage had caused her, behaving so well that in the end she was quite satisfied with her new life, and felt for this prince the greatest love and tenderness." But to have hated Charles would seem to have been impossible. All writers are unanimous as to the sweetness of his character in personal intercourse.

A good deal is known about Anne's equipment for her first journey as a married woman. Her travelling dress was of black velvet trimmed with zebeline, and her gown for best occasions of gold material lined with ermine. Among the furniture also were two beds—a serviceable one, draped with black, white, and velvet cloth; and another hung with gold brocade and bordered with a heavy fringing of black.

During the journey Anne received innumerable wedding presents, and at the gates and squares of every town plays were acted for the two young people. Most of these were mystery plays, but a certain number of farces were introduced for variety. What these comic plays were like can be gathered from the *Farce du Cuvier*, famous a little later. It deals with a hen-pecked husband, whose wife had provided a

written list of his household duties in order to jog his harried memory.

One day, while washing the linen, his wife fell into the copper. The conversation between them is the dramatic moment of the play. I quote it as given in Mr. Van Laun's interesting "History of French Literature."

Wife (*in the copper*). Good husband, save my life. I am already quite fainting; give me your hand a while.

Jacquemet. It is not in my list . . .

Wife. Alas! oh, who will hear me? Death will come and take me away.

Jac. (*reading his list*). "To bake, to attend to the oven, to wash, to sift, to cook."

Wife. My blood is already quite changed. I am on the point of death.

Jac. (*continuing to read*). "To rub, to mend, to keep bright the kitchen utensils . . ."

Wife. Come quickly to my assistance.

Jac. "To come, to go, to bustle, to run . . ."

Wife. Never shall I pass this day.

Jac. "To bake the bread, to heat the oven . . ."

Wife. Ah, your hand; I am approaching my last moment.

Jac. "To bring the corn to the mill . . ."

Wife. You are worse than a mastiff.

Jac. "To make the bed early in the morning . . ."

Wife. Oh, you think this is a joke.

Jac. "And then to put the pot on the fire . . ."

Wife. Oh, where is my mother, Jacquette?

Jac. "And to keep the kitchen clean . . ."

Wife. Go and fetch the priest.

Jac. My paper is ended, but I tell you, without more ado, that it is not on my list.

In the end, having wrung from her a promise of docility, he helped her out. The farce concluded with the joyful murmur, "For the future, then, I shall be master, for my wife allows it."

But the great day of Anne's youth was the day of her coronation in France. No toy lay so dear to her heart as a crown, and no one could have felt more unspeakably proud and great when, before an immense crowd of nobles and people, her crowning took place at the church of St. Denis. She wore a gown of pure white satin, and hung her hair—which was long and beautiful—in two great plaits over her shoulders. St. Gelais de Montluc said of her at this time, "It did one good to look at her, for she was young, pretty, and so full of charm that it was a pleasure to watch her."

Afterwards followed the unavoidable reaction, when the ordinary routine of existence had to be confronted. Anne's position, once the glamorous days of public functions were over, revealed innumerable drawbacks. She was a little girl in a strange country, surrounded by persons unwilling to surrender either power or precedence.

Anne of Beaujeau, the former Regent—harsh, efficient, domineering—was the first power with whom Anne suffered combat. Small questions of precedence kindled the tempers of both. The elder Anne loved power as much as the younger, and was a woman few people cared to defy. But the juvenile bride had been modelled a little bit after the same pattern ; she also possessed indomitable qualities, and had no intention of being a queen for nothing. The Regent—her surprise must have been overwhelming—found herself worsted. Sensible as well as proud, she retired before any pronounced unseemliness had occurred, and left the two young people to manage the kingdom for themselves.

But the period of domesticity between Charles and Anne did not continue long. There was a little love-making, a little house decorating, and then came the momentous first invasion of Italy. Commines, a shrewd and plain-spoken observer, says a good deal about this Italian campaign, which he accompanied. Both he and the Italian historian Guicciardini refer with pronounced contempt to Charles's mismanagement of it, while Commines goes so far as to state practically that nothing but the grace of God kept the army from annihilation.

While Charles was away time passed wearily for Anne. Previously to her husband's departure, when barely fifteen years old, she had given birth to her first baby, the needful son and heir. But to make the days more empty and interminable, the child was taken from her at the beginning of hostilities. For safety's sake he remained at the castle of Amboise, strongly guarded by a hundred of the Scottish guard. So carefully was he protected, in fact, that when one of his godfathers, François de Paule, came to see him, he was only allowed to bring one other priest with him—a man born in France, and one who had never been to Naples. Unfortunately, no guards could save a life so feeble as this child's of a child-mother. Almost immediately after Charles had come back from Italy the little creature fell ill and died with tragic suddenness.

Before this, and after her husband's safe arrival, Anne is said to have been unprecedently light-hearted. To exist for months, as she had been doing, waiting hour after hour for the daily courier's arrival, was to become drained at last of every feeling except a tortured expectancy. Charles's death would not only have made her a widow, it would have taken her cherished crown away from her also. To hold both safe again

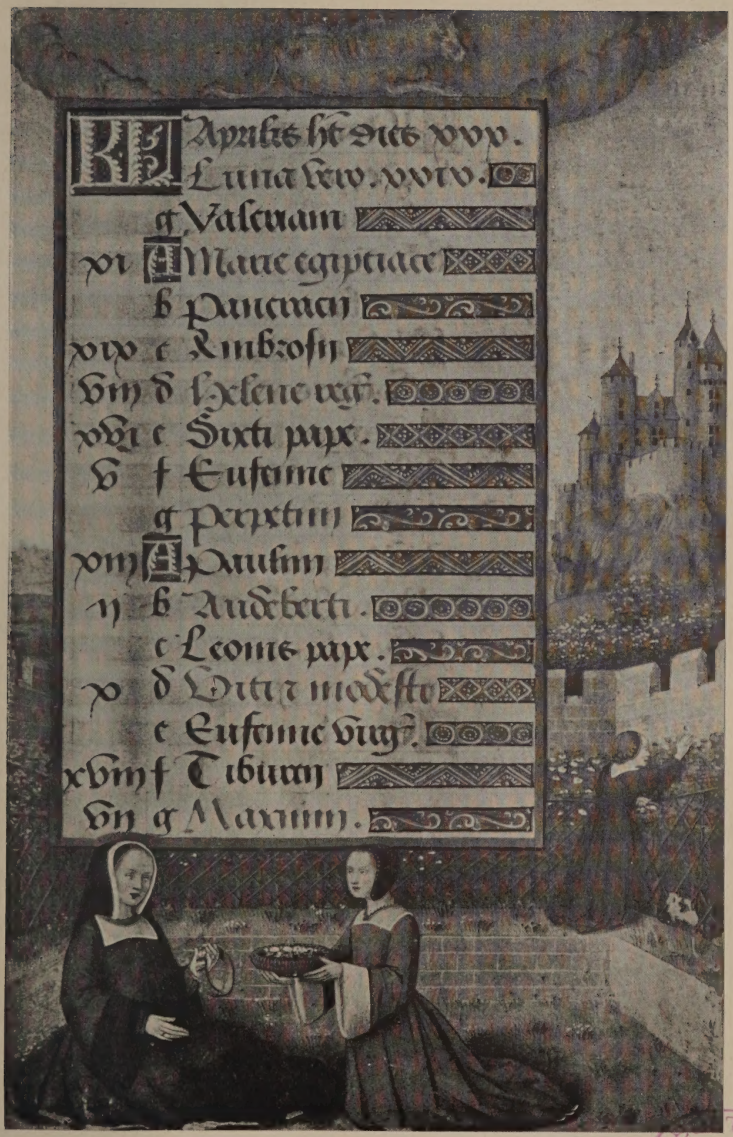
relaxed even Anne's cherished decorum of manner. But the death of the Dauphin struck the newly arisen gaiety abruptly out of her. She grieved passionately, bewildered that God should do this inexplicable and bitter thing to her. How fiercely she rebelled is shown by the following incident. Her friend of childish days, Louis, Duke of Orleans, was now once more heir to the throne. In a court of mourning he struck Anne as unduly blithe and cheerful, and instantly her sore heart revolted and hated him. Commines, who mentions the circumstance, says that "for a long time afterwards they did not speak." As a matter of fact, Anne insisted upon his removal from the court circle. Louis retired to his own home at Blois, where he fell back upon the hobbies of his father, the childlike poet Louis of Bourbon, whose poems he collected while he waited for his old friend's nerves to tranquillize.

Charles meanwhile gladdened his spirit with architectural interests. He had come back deeply influenced by the beauty of Italian methods, and having brought with him a crowd of Italian artists and craftsmen.

How the tumultuous Anne struck him after the subtlety of Italian womenfolk is not mentioned. The women of the Italian Renaissance

were an education in themselves. Charles had been cajoled by Beatrice, had been knelt to by Isabella of Aragon, had been flattered delicately and unceasingly. His path to Rome had been strewn with gracious ladies, all more consummate, more complex, more highly wrought, as it were, than his own house-bound countrywomen. Anne, besides, could never have been a person of irresistible daily whimsicalities. Fortunately, Charles possessed strong domestic instincts, and in justice to Anne it should be mentioned that she did not show the same indifference to personal graces usually associated with women of her practical temperament. She had a few dainty vanities—was particular about baths and washing in basins all of gold; and had shoals of little scented sachets placed between her linen and in the clothes she wore, violets being her favourite perfume.

In the April after the Italian campaign the two were at Amboise Castle, Charles, it is said, having grown from an irresponsible youth into a ruler actuated by definite tenderness for his people. And then a tragic thing happened. On the Saturday before Easter some of the household were playing tennis in the courtyard. Anne and Charles went to watch them play, but in passing through a corridor known as the *Galerie*



FROM THE *CALENDRIES*
IN ANNE'S "BOOK OF HOURS"

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Hacquelebac—about to be pulled down—Charles hit his head against the low frame of a doorway. The accident seemed trivial, and for some time he watched the players as if unaffected by it; but suddenly, in the middle of a phrase, he dropped mysteriously to the ground. Placed upon a mattress, he lingered until the evening, and died at eleven o'clock at night. He was then twenty-eight, and Anne, struck brusquely from placid trivialities to the supreme incident of existence, was twenty-four.

Louis of Orleans had become King of France. Anne, huddled in a darkened room at Amboise, cried for hours without ceasing. She sat forlornly on the floor, and knew the uselessness of wordy consolations. Charles had been good to her; the future would have been full of pleasant habits. Now he was dead, and there remained nobody whose interests and hers were identical. Many would be brazenly glad that she was cast down. She who yesterday had been Queen of France, was now nobody—a widow—whose crown, that salient, exalting possession, belonged to the wife of Louis. True, she was still Duchess of Brittany, but she had suffered sufficient baneful experience to know that they would soon try and wrench that honour from her also.

No efforts could appease her grief. A contemporary nobleman, writing to his wife four days after Charles's death, remarked, "The queen still continues the same mourning, and they cannot pacify her." How could they, when all that she craved had been subtracted from her life? For days she crouched upon the floor of a black-draped room, desolately rebellious against the stupid harshness of life. Hour after hour she moaned, and cried, and wrung her hands. Nevertheless, for all her stricken gestures, her brain worked well enough. She began to write letters the day after Charles's death, and as soon as she had at last been induced to eat, she signed an order to re-establish the Chancellorship of Brittany. Courage and intelligence continued intact for all the abasement of her attitude. She wept, but as she wept she thought out practical behaviour for the future.

At the same time, there is no doubt that she was genuinely disturbed and disconsolate. When, after some days, they brought her the usual charming white of royal widows, her pitiable and comfortless thoughts mutinied instinctively against its serenity and calm. She would not wear it: black was the only hue that could meet the blackness of her life—white revolted her as an equal offence and mockery. With a dogged insistence

upon the hurt that tortured her, she set an undesirable fashion, and through a tumultuous intolerance of pain did away with an old prettiness of custom.

Three days after her widowhood her old friend the new king called to express condolence. Anne still repined in her darkened chamber. The only light that fell upon her came from two great candles. She had not risen when a bishop came to offer consolation, but she probably did so now, and made a grudging obeisance to the man who had suddenly climbed above her.

Louis XII.'s manners, to every woman save his wife, were notoriously deferential. Anne, moreover, was still very youthful, and in the semi-darkness her great mass of shining hair could not but have looked soft, and young, and movingly incongruous with her sorrow. They spoke of the dead man's funeral. Anne expressed the wish that nothing that could do honour to his memory should be omitted. Louis answered instantly that all her wishes were sacred, and did, in fact, pay all the funeral expenses out of his private purse. Then she stated her desire to wear black as mourning, and once more Louis acquiesced with a visible desire to spare her feelings to the utmost of his capacity. In the

soft, uncertain candlelight a new emotional quality may well have appertained to the girl so harshly and abruptly widowed. Surrounded by darkness, her desolate youthfulness, and her pitiful desire to obscure her youth in still more blackness, might easily have stirred an old admirer to a renewal of tenderness.

Anne continued to moan a good deal for several days, but it is questionable whether the hidden excursions of her mind were so storm-beaten after this visit as before it. The majority of women have an intuitive knowledge of the emotions felt by men when in their company, and Anne possessed great powers of discernment. She could perfectly understand that Louis XII. wished desperately to retain Brittany. By the terms of her marriage settlement it now indisputably belonged to her once more. She also knew, with an acute sense of the potentialities flung open by the fact, that the idea of having his own marriage annulled had become an invincible necessity of his nature. The wayward brutality of her conduct to him after the death of the Dauphin might have chilled original kindliness of feeling; but he had thought her charming previously, and the desire for Brittany would naturally facilitate the effort to find her charming henceforward.

There is no doubt that Louis's visit, at least in some degree, alleviated depression; for a little later, with the impetuosity that kept Anne from being a totally dull woman, she said, in answer to some remark of one of her ladies, that sooner than stoop to a lower than her husband she would be a widow all her days, adding, in the same breath, that she believed she could still one day be the reigning Queen of France if she should wish it. A quaint writer of that time described Anne accurately, but kindly, when he said, "The greatness of heart of the queen-duchess was beyond all belief, and could yield in nothing that belonged to her, neither suffer that she should not have entire control of it."

But her statement was literally correct. While she lived in the strict retirement of mourning, writing lucid, emphatic letters to Brittany, the new king flung himself into the business of repudiating Louis XI.'s daughter. It is an episode that considerably smirches the propriety of Anne —afterwards a great upholder of propriety—for several further visits took place between the black-robed widow and the new king, and that they did not meet merely to extol the merits of the dead husband soon became apparent. Charles died in April, and in August two acts, dated on

the same day, were passed. In the one Anne consented to marry Louis so soon as his present marriage should be annulled in Rome, and in the second Louis agreed to give back to the duchess the two towns of Nantes and Fougeres, if by death or other impediment he should prove unable to marry her within a year.

The divorce was not a difficult one to obtain. Alexander needed French assistance for the aggrandisement of Cæsar Borgia, and sent him personally with the Bull to Louis. Then a tribunal, formed of a cardinal, two bishops, and other minor dignitaries, sat upon the case and called upon the queen to appear in person. Both she and the council knew that the inquiry was a degrading and unmerciful farce. Nevertheless, for form's sake, endless questions were put to the woman who was at one and the same time both so ugly and so beautiful. They questioned her concerning her father, Louis XI., pressing to obtain involuntary exposures. Jeanne's sensitive and finely poised reserve could not be splintered by insistence. "I am not aware of it," or "I do not think so," were all that her lips yielded. She rendered even distress a little lovely by the silence in which she sheltered it. In reality, Louis's memory must have been essentially

painful. For, like her husband, he had unremittingly hated her. As a child her tutor was even in the habit of hiding her in his robe for safety if by chance Louis met them in a corridor.

From family discords the court passed to the question of her marriage. Bluntly, they informed the martyred woman that she was a deformity. "I know I am not as pretty or as well made as most women," was the answer, that seemed to carry a lifetime's tears below its plaintiveness. They insisted further that she was not fit for marriage. Then a little anguished humanness seems to have fluttered for a moment through her patient spirit. "I do not think that is so. I think I am as fit to be married as the wife of my groom George, who is quite deformed, and yet has given him beautiful children." But all the while both she and those who questioned her knew with perfect clarity that neither questions nor answers could affect the ultimate issue. They were but a mean and vulgar form gone through to blind the judgment of the people. Louis XII. denied that their union had ever passed beyond the marriage service. Once more Jeanne fell back upon grave words conveying nothing. "I want," she answered, "no other judges than the king himself. If he swears on oath that the facts

brought against me are true, I consent to condemnation."

That gave all they needed, and the marriage was declared null and void. For the last time Jeanne and Louis went through the discomfort of an interview, and for once, and once only, Jeanne's consummate self-immolation drew tears from her husband. Then she passed out of his existence, and became, what she had always desired to be, a nun. In one of the sermons preached on the anniversary of her death, it was said of her, "She was so plain that she was repudiated by her husband; she was so beautiful that she became the bride of Jesus Christ."

Anne and Louis were then delivered from all impediments, and in the year after Charles's death were married at the Nantes Cathedral. The marriage settlement drawn up was entirely advantageous to Anne. Undoubtedly Louis loved her. In his time many kinds of women had engrossed him, for he was a man who, as one writer puts it kindly, "did not disdain the pastime of ladies." But after many love affairs, and much knowledge of women's subtleties, he finally surrendered to the charms of a woman possessed of no subtleties of any sort.

The attraction is difficult to account for.

ANNE KNEELING

FROM THE "BOOK OF HOURS"

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Possibly Anne held him through his domestic leanings, and through her own indomitable force of character. The monotonies of guilty love episodes may have given a restful grace to placid respectability; Louis knew by heart every cankering perversity inherent to the women who are not virtuous, and probably, therefore, set additional store by one possessing at least a steadfast and limpid purity. How much virtue in a woman, when she was not Jeanne, appealed to him is clear from a remark made some years later. It had reference to Anne's aggressiveness. Some one complained of it to Louis. His answer offered no consolation, but expressed a definite attitude of mind. He remarked merely, "One must forgive much to a virtuous woman."

Anne's affection for Louis is more immediately comprehensible. He was peculiarly lovable, though almost as ugly as Charles himself. He had a low forehead, prominent ruminating eyes, a sensual, affectionate mouth, high cheek-bones, and a flabby skin. It was the face of a man who liked life as it was, and people as they were; there appeared in it no desire for illusions of any kind. He had in his own nature all the sympathetic weaknesses, and his expression conveyed

the easy tolerance of a nature which had at least used experience as a school of understanding. A Venetian ambassador once called him "a child of nature," and he was essentially natural, with an almost childlike trustfulness, not so much of manner as of opinion. He ruled—save for his unfortunate passion to possess a piece of Italy—like a man preoccupied with the happiness of his children. The people adored him. If money had to be raised, he made personal sacrifices rather than burden the poor with additional taxation, while his home policy was persistently humane and sensible. Historians rarely do him justice. Because he failed to prove a great diplomatist, they ignore his possession of a delightful personality. In regard to Italy, he was plainly foolish; but then Italy stood for the romance of life—the adventure that drew the commonplace out of existence. Even specialized astuteness could have blundered easily in the cunning complications of international politics at that crisis, and Louis went to Italy, not out of policy, but literally because he could not keep himself away from it.

Though in private life his interests were largely intellectual, he had always a certain strain of cordial earthliness. The "pastime of ladies"

he is said to have given up entirely after his second marriage, but good dinners and good wine he liked to the end of life. When Ferdinand of Aragon was told that Louis complained of being twice cheated by him, he exclaimed exultantly, "He lies, the *drunkard;* I have cheated him more than ten times."

Anne stood for his antithesis. She was regrettably without small weaknesses, and she forgave nobody. When Louis came to the throne he remarked, "It would ill become the King of France to avenge the wrongs of the Duke of Orleans." But if any one hurt Anne, she could not rest until a greater hurt had been flung back upon the offender. Once a grown woman, and married to Louis, she was, except from the point of view of housewifery, almost completely a failure. She might have had more flagrant vices and aroused compassionate affection. But she was pre-eminently respectable, pious, hedged in by sedate rules of conduct. And all the time one of the most corroding sins possible flourished in her to offend posterity. Anne's revengefulness is like a blight, destroying the grace of her femininity.

Happily she was generous, and generosity is a sweet redemption of much crookedness. She

loved to give presents. After her second marriage she kept a gallery full of jewellery and precious stones, which she gave from time to time to the "wives of the captains or others who had distinguished themselves in the wars, or faithfully served her husband Louis." Also, she never denied the tragic clamour of the poor. Mezerai wrote: "You saw thousands of poor waiting for her alms, whenever she left the palace."

Of the private life led by Anne and Louis an unusual amount is known. They got up at six in summer and seven in winter. They had their dinner at eight or nine in the morning. At two o'clock they took some light refreshments. By five or six supper was served, and either at eight or nine o'clock they went to bed, after having a glass of wine and some spiced cakes. An old rhyme of the period might have been written for them—

> "To rise at five, and dine at nine,
> Sup at five, and sleep at nine,
> Keeps one alive until ninety-nine."

Louis passed the larger part of the day occupied with state matters. To quicken recognition of the gravity of a ruler's efforts, he read fragmentarily but constantly Cicero's "Treatise on

Duties;" it was to him like a spring of stimulating waters. When he had nothing else to do, he made love to his "Bretonne"—the name, for intimate use, given by him to Anne. She could have stirred no poetic imaginings, but she was comfortable to his nature. Domesticity and the hearthside securities were expressed by her.

Meanwhile, Anne ruled her household after the manner of an austere schoolmistress. Like all unimaginative people, she shrank from any form of waywardness, and none was permitted near her person. Her court grew to be spoken of as a school of good conduct for girls of the upper classes. Whether because she took so many or not, the beds for the rooms of the maids of honour were six feet long by six feet wide, so that several girls slept in the same bed—a little row of heads on one long pillow. No maids of honour were allowed to address a man save with an audience in the room. When the king went hunting, Anne sat surrounded by intimidated ladies, all sedately at work upon huge pieces of tapestry.

Even their recreations had to be of a sober and cautious nature. Françoise D'Alençon, the sister-in-law of Margaret D'Angoulême, is reported to have kept intact the traditions of Anne's court, and the following quotation is a description of

how her household was managed. "She made all her ladies also come into the room, and after having looked at them one by one, she called back any whose bearing struck her as plebeian or wanting in propriety. She scolded any whose dress was not as it should be. Then she examined each one's work, and if there was a fault, righted it, and if the little progress made showed negligence and laziness, scolded the worker pretty sharply. As to their morals, she allowed none of them to have any conversation alone with any man, nor suffered any conversation before them not strictly proper and honourable. . . . As to their pastimes and festivals, this prudent princess did not keep them so strictly but that they were allowed to walk about, and play in the gardens or in some honourable house; or that they '*balassent*,' or played the guitar, *d'espinettes*, or other musical instruments, recommended by the nobility and other honourable minds; or that they should sing modestly and religiously in their room, which she often made them do in her presence, and while she herself joined them. But she never allowed them to sing other songs than the Psalms of David, or the songs of the dead Queen of Navarre. She did as much for their literature, for as she herself only read the

Scriptures, or some historical biography which contained no false docctrine, so she would not allow her ladies to read anything else either."

With insignificant alterations the picture conveys as accurately Anne's method of management as that of the inflexible Françoise D'Alençon. Perhaps of the two Anne's control permitted more brightness to stray through its severity. There were occasional dances at the court, as well as journeys from one town to another. But it was not Anne's destiny to retain either of her husbands comfortably at her elbow. Though Louis loved both his wife and his people, the desire for adventure fretted the surface of his domestic life. Before Anne gave birth to their first baby, he had already gone to struggle for a piece of the country which perpetually ensnared him with abnormal and inexplicable longings.

During the first expedition Ludovico Sforza was taken prisoner. In this one matter Louis's conduct freezes one's blood. He brought Il Moro to France, and imprisoned him underground at the castle of Loches, while to increase safety he was placed every night in an iron cage. For ten years Ludovico endured this extreme limit of mental and physical privation, his magnificent physique refusing to admit Death sooner.

But even at this distance of time it is not possible to think without unhappiness of the destroying agony of such imprisonment.

While Louis was in Italy, Anne wrote to him daily. A little letter from her proving that Louis was both affectionate and in love is still in existence. It commenced, "A loving and beloved wife writes to her husband, still more beloved, the object both of her regrets and her pride, led by the desire of glory far from his own country. For her, poor *amante,* every moment is full of terrors. To be robbed of a prince more lover than husband, what a terrible anguish it is!" The words "more lover than husband" reveal the practice of constant minor and endearing attentions.

A miniature painting of the period discloses Anne writing one of these daily letters. She sits in her bedroom, clearly used as a sitting-room as well. Her black gown trails consequentially upon the floor, but her table and seat are both perfectly unpretentious. Round her, on the ground, sit her ladies-in-waiting, intensely docile and industrious. Besides being disciplined in an outward meekness, they were, it would seem, obliged to adopt a court uniform, since in all the pictures they are dressed absolutely alike. Anne's inkstand and

pen are both gold, and a little handkerchief is set conveniently near to wipe the seemly tears that should blur her eyes as she writes. At the back is a charming four-poster, rich and radiant with opulent gold hangings.

When Louis returned to France, society flung its eager frivolity into a series of organized rejoicings. But already to Anne life was beginning to imply unrestfulness. Louise de Savoie had a son Francis; and unless Anne gave birth to one later, this child became heir to the throne of France. The two women hated each other with an almost equally tortured intensity; certainly from this time forward Louise spoiled the peace of Anne's existence. Even without the poignant person of Francis, Duc D'Angoulême, some friction would still have been unavoidable. Anne clung to sober and steadfast if uninspired propriety; Louise de Savoie in conduct had no morals, no restraint, and no delicate prejudices whatsoever. Her brain teemed with complexities, exaggerations, and superlatives. She saw everything through a falsifying excitement, while to weave a lie was one degree more comfortable to her than to speak veraciously. In appearance also the advantages were on her side, and possessing an intuitive gift for understanding the worst of

men, her society was dangerously flattering and easy to them.

Anne flinched, both at the other's conduct and at her possession of an heir to the French throne. Fleurange, who knew Anne well, said that there was never an hour but these two houses were not quarrelling. Both women, as the years passed, grew to have a constant piercing apprehension that killed all abiding buoyancy of feeling. In Anne's case the anguish was far the sharper and the more pitiful. Again and again she throbbed at the expectation of motherhood, and after nine overwrought months, when to both women the suspense had grown almost more than they could suffer, a girl, or a boy born dead, came to crush the vitality out of Anne's brave spirit.

After the birth of Claude a still keener edge was given to disquietude. Almost immediately arose the question of a marriage between the girl and Francis. For years, with all the passionate fierceness of her nature, Anne fought to ward off this triumph for her adversary and to marry the child to a different husband. In 1501 a temporary victory expanded her heart. The baby became promised to the Duke of Luxembourg, afterwards Charles V., son of the Archduke Philip of Austria. This engagement continued

for several years. Then Louis realized that the probability of his having a son had grown very small, and that under these conditions the Austrian marriage would be in the last degree impolitic. For some reason not stated, he and Anne stumbled at this period into a serious breach of tenderness. His attitude to the question of Claude's marriage may have roused her to a despairing fury. To surrender the little plain girl she delighted in, to the son of the woman she abominated, was a hard thing to do—too hard for a heart already contracted with useless yearnings. Louis met her strenuous obstinacy with an implacable conclusiveness. The pulse of the nation beat, he knew, for the young D'Angoulême, who was "all French;" and his own opinion could be summed up in one sentence—that "he preferred to marry his mice to rats of his own barn."

A chill, destroying discord rose between the married lovers, who had once known such warmth in each other's presence. Louis, stung out of placidity, even commenced to snub the proud and suffering woman struggling against his wishes. During one of the recurring discussions upon the same subject, he informed her that "at the creation of the world horns were given to the doe as well as to the stag, but the doe venturing

to use these defences against her mate, they were taken from her." If he had whipped Anne, the sense of stinging humiliation could hardly, one imagines, have been sharper. For no woman bore herself with a more unyielding dignity before witnesses, and the remark was not made beyond the reach of auditors.

In 1505, Anne, fretted, sore of heart, beaten and discouraged, went to Brittany. The actual reason of her going is not given, but having gone she stayed there, and more, wrote no longer daily letters to "her loving and beloved." Outwardly she was happy—held magnificent receptions, and went interesting journeys from one town to another. Clearly it was rest of heart to be away. Home had become a place of piercing bitterness, of rending and exhausting antagonisms. On a vital question she and Louis pulled different ways. Here in Brittany friction and sorrow lulled a little. Her nerves took rest, and her heart forgot at intervals.

That she flinched from return as from a renewal of intolerable provocation is unmistakable. In the September of 1505 she was at Rennes; and while she was there, Louis's friend, the Cardinal D'Amboise — upon whose death Pope Julius II. "thanked God he was now Pope

ST. HELENA

FROM ANNE'S "BOOK OF HOURS"

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alone"—wrote with a hint of distraction concerning the gravity of her prolonged absence from France. He said, "The king sent for me this afternoon, madame. I have never seen him so put out, as also I understand from Gaspar, to whom he spoke in my presence." The letter concluded with an urgent appeal that she should return and "so satisfy the king and also stop strangers from gossiping."

Four days afterwards he wrote again: "Although wonderfully pleased at the assurance you send me of making all possible haste to return to court, I am deeply distressed that you do not mention any date. I do not know what to answer the king, who is in the greatest perplexity. . . . I wish to God I was with you. . . . I can only say that I grieve with all my heart that you and the king no longer speak frankly to one another." Still she lingered, like a person bathing weary limbs in warm and soothing waters. Amboise, seeing the oncoming of permanent alienation, wrote again, "For God's sake don't fall, you and the king, into these moods of mutual distrust, for if it lasts neither confidence nor love can hold out, not to speak of the harm that can come of it, and the contempt of the whole Christian world."

In the end Anne drew upon her tired courage and came back. Once together again, moreover, she and Louis must have yielded to gentler feelings, for two children were born afterwards. But from this time to the end Anne never again felt the glow of life really stream upon her—a chill loneliness sapped capacity for pleasure. Once Louis exchanged the lover for the husband, they possessed no mental companionableness to fall back upon. They saw few things with the same emotion, and for successful marriage this is the primal necessity. Anne was intuitively religious, and Louis had been excommunicated—without visible disturbance—for his exploits in the second Italian campaign. To increase a marked sense of the difference between their views, Brittany had been excluded from the excommunication.

Everything for Anne had grown a little out of gear—a little hurtful and antagonistic. Claude was lame and not pretty—Louise's handsome son and daughter were adored by everybody.

Moreover, she had been coerced and disregarded; for all her excessive stateliness men knew her as a humiliated and beaten woman. Before Louis left for the third Italian campaign, the betrothal of Claude to Francis had been ratified.

Deputies from the different departments had visited Louis at Plessis-les-Tours. They called him "Father of his people;" then upon bent knees begged that he would "give madame your only daughter to Monsieur François here present, who is a thorough Frenchman." Both Louis and the kneeling deputies shed tears, but though a sentimental emotion fluttered them in passing, the scene was essentially an organized drama, gone through in order to cut the last possible ground of resistance from under Anne's feet. Two days later Francis, aged eleven, and Claude, aged six, were formally promised to one another.

There is one more outstanding incident in Anne's life—her bitter warfare with the great Marechale de Gie. It has been called the inexcusable stain upon her reputation. The story certainly leaves her nakedly crude, fiercely elemental, but at least upon this occasion a glaring provocation roused her to fury. Louis fell ill. He had enjoyed his youth too coarsely, and paid heavily in after years for the absence of more delicate cravings. Anne nursed him with an affection made quick through terror. "She never left his room all day, and did everything she was able herself." But Louis failed to get better. Each day he drew nearer the purlieus of finality;

his doctors perceived no possibility even of return. Then Anne, sitting wearily by the bedside of the sick man, did undoubtedly think of practical matters. She remembered Louise and their mutual hatred. Historians express disgust at what followed, but in reality there is nothing to be deeply disgusted about. The brain in times of tense, overwrought excitement is assailed by many discordant and trumpery remembrances. Anne, alert and nervous both, gazed at the sinking patient, and recalled the valuable furniture, jewellery, and plate, whose possession might be contested later. Had she been a woman of momentous feeling, the knowledge could equally have flashed through her kindled intelligence, but would have left it bitterly indifferent. Anne was not strung with overwhelming affections, and her predominating common sense saw that after this man's death she had still a future to organize. Without relaxing one personal nursing labour, she gave rapid orders to the household, until all the articles stated as hers in the marriage contract were despatched by ship to Brittany.

Gie had long ago placed his interests upon the side of the power to follow. Being informed of the queen's arrangements, he stopped her

vessels, definitely refusing to allow them to leave the country.

There was a certain reckless temerity in the action; but Louis, it was understood, could not live more than a few hours, and the new king would know how to reward such strenuous adroitness in his interests. But in this matter Gie was unlucky.

Louis suddenly—and apparently unreasonably—abandoned the notion of dying. From extreme collapse he rapidly recovered, and immediately afterwards banished Gie from court. There are slight variations in the story—in one account Anne was labouring to remove Claude to Brittany as well—but the above is the account given by the greatest number.

For a short time Gie remained thankfully at his magnificent place in the country, clutching at the fact that his punishment went very comfortably with his instincts. But Anne's heart was too primitive for trivial retaliations. Mezerai did not say for nothing, "She was terrible to those who offended her." Presently Gie received a summons to answer to the charges of *lèse-majesté* and peculation, was arrested, and after being treated with a shameless brutality, received a verdict of guilty, with a loss of all honours and

five years' banishment from court. The ugliest part of a story—in which from the beginning everybody behaved with a rather ignoble sagacity—is the report that Anne openly stated that she did not desire the Marechale's death, since death gave relief from suffering, and she chafed for him to live and feel all the misery of being low when he had been high; in other words, that she craved a long and cankering duration to his discomfiture.

After the birth of another daughter—the child Renée, subsequently to be Duchess of Ferrara—Anne's last fragment of happiness died in her. Jean Marot, father of the famous Clement Marot, referred to her in some verses with a singular realism and comprehension. He wrote—

> "At this time was in Lyons
> The uneasy queen. Always in grief
> For the regrets her tired heart
> Bore incessantly."

She was, in truth, tired to death of the involved labour of life. Thoughts of the complacent, unprincipled, mendacious Louise de Savoie, whose son was heir to the throne of France, fermented in her blood, and kept her heart from beating contentedly. From the time of Renée's birth she surrendered to an uncontested weakliness. Though she became *enceinte* again shortly

afterwards, hope scarcely fluttered, and her physical condition bore witness to a mind past any salutary optimism. She had already given birth to three sons, not one of whom had lived, and throughout the household it was recognized that she lacked good fortune in motherhood.

In 1512, some one wrote: "The queen is in great pain, and her baby is expected at the end of this month or the beginning of next. But there is not the fuss and excitement here that was made over the others."

The child came, but the triumphant Louise records the event in her dairy with cynical cheerfulness: ". . . His birth will not hinder the exaltation of my Cæsar, for the infant was born dead."

Anne, worn and heartbroken in her second best bed—always used for *accouchements*—becomes at last entirely touching. She was by this time ultimately and irremediably beaten. The child had been a son, but was dead. "She took pleasure in nothing afterwards," said D'Argentre, while she continued so ill that most of the time she had to stay in bed. Louis, back from renewed disasters in Italy, found her there on his return. Shortly afterwards—on the 9th of February, 1514—she died.

Louis grieved considerably. The flaring heat of latter quarrels had burnt up much original tenderness, but De Seyssel's statement that Louis "loved her so that in her he had placed all his pleasure and delight," was an approximate interpretation of their position until vital antagonisms sharpened the tongues of both.

Anne was given a sumptuous funeral. The arrangements for it, could she have known them, would have caused her exquisite pleasure. For six days she lay in her own room, prayed for unceasingly. Then she was placed upon a *Lit de Parade*, and covered with a pall of gold cloth bordered with ermine, the fur represented by the coat-of-arms of Brittany. She lay underneath this, with white gloves upon her hands, and a crown upon her head; her dress was of purple velvet, and on each side were cushions holding the Sceptre and the Hand of Justice.

After the funeral Louis sent her heart in a golden case to be entombed in Brittany. On the casket was written—

> "In this small vessel
> Of pure, fine gold
> Rests the greatest heart
> Of any woman in the world."

But as a matter of fact, the one great

drawback to Anne was that she had not heart enough. Her presence inspired neither tenderness nor laughter, her society neither encouraged nor comforted. And the consequence was that nobody could have been missed less. On the whole she had been a good woman; except in times of tumultuous temper, she had endeavoured to live conscientiously and reasonably. Only she possessed no deep-dwelling sympathies; consequently when she died she was dead immediately. It is the people who kindle perpetually at the needs of others who live for years in the hearts of those they have penetrated.

LUCREZIA BORGIA

1480–1519

OF all the famous women of the Renaissance, Lucrezia Borgia is, in one sense, though in one sense only, the most disappointing. There are a great number of books dealing with her personality, but little real information. Few personal friends reveal more of themselves than Margaret D'Angoulême, Anne of Brittany, or Beatrice D'Este. What is evasive about them is pleasantly evasive, since every woman should retain a little that is inexplicable. But Lucrezia Borgia evades altogether. There is nothing, from beginning to end, comprehensible to seize upon. All the facts of her life are ascertainable, but never a word concerning the temperament that to a certain extent gave life to them. The events of the first half of her existence are begrimed with evil, but the evil is so involved and extraordinary, so little in keeping with the second half of her existence, and in many

instances so dubious, that it scarcely adheres to her. In the end she emerges with such inherent calm, such effulgent gentleness, that the whole story of her Roman days has an air, not only of inapplicability, but of extraneousness. The actions of that early period seem to cling to her little more than the unconscious proceedings of a sleep-walker.

To disarm once and for all any preconceived prejudice, it is only necessary to look at the supposed portrait of her as St. Catherine, painted by Pintorricchio. In that she is adorable. To believe in the absolute baseness of a creature with such an expression is not possible. Looking at it, do we see anything save a child, nearly grown up in years, but with a little brain absolutely muddled and unreasonable? Exquisitely plaintive and helpless, the figure seems surely as if its youth appealed against it knew not what. The creature is all prettiness, weakness, and grace. Standing with slender hands in a useless attitude, her expression appears destitute of any vital understandings, but conveys instead the very essence of the sweetness and dependence possible to femininity. The little mouth is weak but endearing, the little chin weak but tender-hearted. The whole face, framed in its

loose and volatile hair, exhales a gentle, childish passivity. Only in the eyes lurks an unconscious wistfulness, as if they knew or foreboded being involved in many tragic contemplations. There is no evil anywhere—there is no *parti pris*, in fact, of any sort. A soft perplexity is perhaps the strongest impression given.

The other likeness of her, stamped upon a medal, and known incontestably to be a portrait, is not so lovable. But no woman's charm could be conveyed in the few hard lines of a profile struck upon a medal. There is no possible opportunity to convey more than an accentuated impression of nose, chin, and forehead. In the medal Lucrezia's gift of gaiety, here almost saucy, is the chief characteristic visible.

This power to be continuously gay, which was so markedly to distinguish her all her life, was perhaps the only good quality Alexander was able to transmit to his daughter; but by this one quality alone, almost, Lucrezia finally lifted herself away—as if it had been solely a cloak thrust about her by the brutality of others —from the darkness of her original reputation. Now one is chiefly conscious of a creature courageously cheerful; a creature continuously desirous to please, to convey gentle impressions,

PROBABLE PORTRAIT OF LUCREZIA IN ST. CATHERINE AND THE ELDERS

BY PINTORRICCHIO

to smooth out everything into pleasantness. Having carefully and repeatedly read the various books upon her, the feeling left is actually of a woman who understood, up to a point, her woman's business uncommonly well, but who suffered sore mishandling during the early crucial years of her existence. The moment they took her out of the undesirable surroundings in which she had been reared, nothing but brave, becoming laughter and comfortable domesticity—Ruskin's demand that a woman should bring "comfort with pleasantness"—issued from her. Obviously there were no roots of evil to renew themselves; at the worst there had been only a nature over-adaptable to outside forces, and a temperament not forceful in powers of resistance.

Born in 1480, she was the daughter of Alexander, then known as Cardinal Rodriquez, and Vanozza Cataneri, a woman whose origin is obscure, but who was certainly educated, and who had two husbands, Giorgio di Croce, and later, when Alexander had turned to younger idols, a certain Carlo Canali, an author of some reputation in his day. During her babyhood Lucrezia remained with her mother in a house close to the cardinal's. But later, though why or when is not known, she was taken from

Vanozza and given into the care of Madonna Adrienne, a widow, and a connection of the cardinal's, said by Gregorovius to be also "very deep" in the Spaniard's confidence. The atmosphere of Madonna Adrienne's house could not have created for Lucrezia early impressions of delicate or winning conduct—she had no groundwork afterwards of moving ideals to fall back upon. There is one incident which lets in all the daylight necessary upon the character of Lucrezia's guardian. Julia Farnese was her son's wife, and it was with her mother-in-law's complete acquiescence that the girl became Alexander's acknowledged mistress. There is something, therefore, under the flagrant circumstances of the case almost offensive in the fact that Adrienne had the child carefully instructed in religious observances, though, for that matter, they were all religious, these women of undesirable conduct. Vanozza, for instance, built a chapel, and was looked upon as deeply devout long before Alexander's death.

Lucrezia's intellectual education took the same surface quality as her spiritual one. The Renaissance ideas of culture for women had not penetrated to Rome, and the child underwent a very different schooling from the D'Estes, the

Gonzagas, and so many others. Her chief facility appears to have been in the matter of languages. Bayard, in 1512, said of her, "She speaks Spanish, Greek, Italian, and French, and a little and very correctly Latin; she also writes and composes poems in all these languages." Moral sense must have remained absolutely sheathed. None of the set who brought her up would have dared to instil so dangerous and disturbing a quality. In Pintorricchio's portrait there is no sign of a living conscience, though she might well from her expression be wistfully looking for it, aware of something wanting.

When Lucrezia was eleven years old, besides, a new impropriety was added to the number already submersing ordinary moral comprehension. It was then that Julia Farnese, aged sixteen, became Alexander's mistress. There was no concealment, and Lucrezia became unhesitatingly involved in the new arrangements. To her the circumstance wore no more unnatural air than marriage. The child had never been in an atmosphere of customary domesticity since she was born; her playfellows were almost all the children of other cardinals, and in thinking of her life it should be remembered that few minds

question easily the standards of conduct grown familiar since early childhood.

She was herself already engaged to two people. Alexander, looking at this time to his own country for a good match for his daughter, had formally promised her hand to a Spaniard. In the same year, considering it a better bargain, he also affianced her to a certain Don Gasparo; so that the child had actually two prospective husbands at one time. Nothing came of either. In 1492, Innocent VII. died, and Rodriguez Borgia was elected Pope in his place, assuming the name of Alexander. He had always notably pleasant manners, but Giovanni de Medeci, looking at the new Pope, remarked, nevertheless, under his breath, "Now we are in the jaws of a ravening wolf, and if we do not flee he will devour us." He devoured a good many, though his primary policy was widespread propitiation.

For Lucrezia, her father's elevation from cardinal to Pope proved immediately significant. The two previously chosen husbands were dropped; neither was good enough for a Pope's daughter. And in 1493 they married her to Giovanni Sforza, who was an independent sovereign, and a relation also of the powerful

Ludovico Sforza of Milan. She was then thirteen years of age, and was to remain, after the marriage, one more year in Rome before her husband took her away to his own possessions. Ostensibly, however, they made a woman of her immediately. She received a house of her own close to the Vatican, Madonna Adrienne passed from governess into lady-in-waiting, and the whole weariness of formal social life became a part of the child's ordinary duties. She had to receive all important visitors to Rome, and behave with the effortless dignity of a great lady. Alphonso of Ferrara, come to render homage to the new Pope, had also to pay his court to this thirteen-year-old bastard, whom he was himself later to marry. He brought her, in fact, as a wedding present from the duke his father, two large and beautifully worked silver washing jugs and basins.

Curiously enough, in the comments made about the marriage, there are none at all concerning the girl herself. At that age she had clearly no distinguishing precocities. The Ferrarese ambassador dismissed her with a phrase, and that referring more to Alexander than the newly made bride. He wrote that the Pope loved his daughter in a superlative degree. It may have

been so: it is a fact most biographers lay stress upon. Nevertheless, almost every single known incident tells against much affection, and it is very certain that he sacrificed her whenever it was necessary, either for Cæsar's ambition or his own purposes.

Another brief reference made to her at this time is in the well-known letter by Pucci. From his statement it would almost seem as if Julia Farnese and Lucrezia were housed together. For he mentioned going to call upon Julia at the Palace of Santa Maria in Porlica, and wrote, "When we got there she had just been washing her hair. We found her sitting by the fire with Madonna Lucrezia, the daughter of his Holiness, and she welcomed both my companions and myself with every appearance of delight. . . . She desired me to see the child, who is already quite big and as like the Pope *adeo ut vere ex ejus semine orta dici possit.*

"Madonna Julia has grown fatter, having developed into a very beautiful woman. While I was there she unbound her hair and had it dressed. Once loose it fell to her feet; I have never seen anything to compare with it. Truly she has the most beautiful hair imaginable. She wore a thin lawn head-dress, and over it the lightest of nets

VIRGIN AND CHILD

BY PINTORRICCHIO, IN THE HALL OF ARTS AT THE VATICAN

BOSTON PUBLIC LIBRARY

interwoven with gold threads, shining like the sun. . . . Her dress was made after the style of the Neapolitans, and trimmed with fur. So was Madonna Lucrezia's, who after a while went and changed hers, coming back in a gown made of purple velvet."

The reference to Lucrezia is singularly meaningless, but the letter itself is interesting. The child of fourteen and the deliberate wanton were evidently, at least, in constant companionship. "Wanton" is a strong expression, but Julia Farnese belonged to the type for whom no other word is equally applicable. She was young, fresh, beautiful, and Pope Alexander was an old corrupt man of sixty. But she became his mistress with the same tranquil publicity with which a woman might become the consort of a reigning sovereign. The fact of her soiled youth and abandoned domestic decencies weighed no more upon imagination, than the casual discarding of an uncared-for garment.

Pintorricchio, in his series of frescoes at the Vatican, is said to have painted her as well as Alexander and Lucrezia. There is, above the door of the Hall of Arts, a madonna and child, the madonna of which is supposed to have been Julia. If so—and it looks essentially like a

portrait—she was very interesting as well as exquisite. There is character and a sort of intelligent carelessness about the face—the kind of carelessness that suggests an intuitive consciousness of the insignificance of most minor occurrences. The error made by Julia was in including ethics among the non-important contingencies.

As regards the question whether she and Lucrezia were really painted by Pintorricchio, there seems little doubt that, since the portrait of Alexander is incontestable, those of the two girls would have been included somewhere in the series of frescoes. Alexander must so certainly have desired them painted, and both would have been about the ages they look in the frescoes at the time Pintorricchio was at work upon the private apartments of the Pope. As a matter of fact, Pintorricchio laboured quietly for years in the rooms through which Lucrezia was constantly passing, and he must have become so much part of unchanging daily impressions, that one imagines all her after memories of life in Rome held as a sort of background the consciousness of the wonderful pictures in which the painter expressed, with perhaps more completeness than anywhere else, his special sense of loveliness.

Lucrezia must have known Pintorricchio from

the time when she was little more than a child until her third marriage, though it is probable that she was at this period too engrossed and light-headed to take much notice of the wistful-looking man making beauty upon every side of her. Certainly the complicated nature of her own domestic drama was in itself sufficient to absorb anybody. Not long after her marriage Il Moro had drawn France into the Neapolitan adventure. Alexander VI. was vehemently opposed to this invasion, and was, besides, close friends with the King of Naples. Instantly the situation became difficult for Lucrezia's husband; the policy of his house and that of his father-in-law had grown brusquely antagonistic.

Giovanni himself was acutely alive to the awkwardness of his own position. In 1494 he wrote to Ludovico that he had been asked by the Pope what he had to say to the situation, and had answered, "Holy Father, everybody in Rome believes that you are in agreement with the King of Naples, who is the enemy of Milan. If it is so, I am in a very difficult position, for I am in the pay of your Holiness and of the last-named state. If things are to follow this course, I do not see how I can serve the one without abandoning the other, though I desire to

detach myself from neither." He concluded the letter by a statement very unflattering to Lucrezia. "If I had known, monseignor," wrote the distracted Sforza, "that I should find myself in my present position, I would sooner have eaten the straw of my bed than have made this marriage."

As a young girl, Lucrezia obviously arrested nobody's notice. This alone suggests that she was not wicked: wickedness always at least produces attention. To her first husband, when he wrote the above letter, she could have held no kind of significance. Shortly after sending it, however, Giovanni left Rome for his own town, Pesaro, taking the girl he so much regretted marrying with him. He was not yet openly on bad terms with the Vatican: in addition to his own wife, he had been given charge of quite a collection of the Pope's ladies. Julia Farnese, Madonna Adrienne, and Madonna Vanozza were all included, an outbreak of the plague in Rome having terrified Alexander as to the safety of the two younger women. Giovanni, probably, would have preferred Lucrezia to have been less accompanied. Involved always in this crowd of feminine connections, she must, as a young girl, have worn almost a mechanical air of manipulation

—have seemed little better than a mouthpiece for the Vatican opinions. While they were at Pesaro, however, husband and wife went through the momentarily uniting experience of falling equally under the Pope's displeasure. They had, it seems, permitted Madonna Julia and Madonna Adrienne to leave them. Julia's brother was seriously ill, and the two women had gone to nurse him. Upon this matter, Alexander, who could be very petulant when thwarted, wrote himself, and not at dictation, to Lucrezia. He wrote that he was much surprised at not having heard more often from them, and in a tense and irritated sentence ordered the girl to be more punctilious for the future. But this was not the real grievance, and he passed instantly to the departure of Julia and her mother. Lucrezia and Giovanni were both held to have behaved equally inexcusably in letting them go without permission from Alexander. He wrote as if they had been two disobedient children, whose deliberate frowardness had resulted, as they must have known perfectly from the beginning, in great annoyance to him personally. At the end of exasperated remonstrance, they were warned that for the future they would never again be trusted. A letter like this, including both in

mutual disgrace, might easily have fugitively roused a slight bond of friendliness between so young a couple. The general opinion is, notwithstanding, that they were never sympathetic. At Pesaro, besides, though Lucrezia remained there a year, they were very seldom together. Giovanni held the position of officer in the Pope's army, and it was a year of sharp anxiety for Alexander. It required Charles VIII.'s feeble return journey to France before the papal ground felt once more solid under the pontiff's feet.

Then Lucrezia was recalled to Rome, and the old wayward existence at her palace near the Vatican was taken up once more. From this time onwards the Borgia scandals thickened with extraordinary rapidity, becoming the interested gossip of every other court in Italy. Alexander's youngest son, Jofre, had married a Spanish girl several years older than himself, and upon the return of political quietude brought her back with him to Rome. This Madonna Sancia alone piled up a staggering accumulation of scandals for Italy to gasp at. She had a passion, in her most innocent moments, for the less tranquil pleasures of life. Her arrival whipped up the gaiety of social Rome into an extremity of worldliness. She was openly flagrant: the word "wickedness"

seemed to have no more unpleasant meaning to her than another. Both her husband's brothers, Giovanni and Cæsar Borgia, were said to be among her lovers. Giovanni Borgia's subsequent murder, in fact, was looked upon by many people as the outcome of her lack of moral reasonableness, Cæsar's jealousy, it was thought, driving him to thrust the other prematurely upon eternity. Between the gorgeous wickedness of Sancia and Julia Farnese, Lucrezia was trailed like some insignificant and unconsidered appendage. She is mentioned constantly as in the society of Sancia, but no impropriety is even suggested concerning her, until the divorce with Giovanni involved her in the hate universally nourished against the rest of the family.

This divorce had been shaping ever since the French invasion had rendered the Sforzas politically useless to Alexander. One day Giovanni Sforza was bluntly requested to abandon Lucrezia. Should he refuse, extreme measures were threatened, and no man so intimate with the family could possibly have been unacquainted with the kind of coercion likely to be employed should he maintain obduracy. For a few days he went about hoarding rather more bitterness than he knew how to deal with. Then a dramatic

urgency brought indecision to an abrupt conclusion. According to most accounts of the story, Jacomino, *camerière* to Giovanni Sforza, was in Lucrezia's room one day when they heard Cæsar Borgia's footsteps outside. Lucrezia had already been made cognizant of the pending divorce. Alexander and Cæsar never regarded the soft and pliant creature as likely to need concealments. She was to them obviously the perfect tool, childlike, flightly, inherently docile, and moved by the least enticement to new anticipations. But Lucrezia even then had some instincts her people did not know of, and to deprive a man of the delight of living was not endurable to her. She must have suspected some sinister communication, for on hearing Cæsar's footsteps she thrust Jacomino behind some tapestry. In the course of conversation, Cæsar stated that the order to assassinate her husband had already been given. It sounds incredible, but then the whole Borgia history has the same quality of impossible melodrama. The moment he had gone Lucrezia rushed to the curtains: the man must go at once and save his master. Twenty-four hours later Giovanni Sforza reached Pesaro. His horse fell dead as he arrived.

Gregorovius states that Lucrezia was not

agreeable to the divorce. It fits in pleasantly with one's conception of her to believe that this was true. The Lucrezia of recent discovery would have been bound by a light and gentle affection to any one not unkind to her, and all her instincts would have been against giving pain to anybody. Certainly, after Giovanni's escape, she felt the weight of some unpleasantness at the Vatican. And shortly afterwards she either went, or was sent in disgrace, to the convent of San Sisto on the Appian Way. In a letter written that June by Donati Aretino to Cardinal Hippolyte D'Este, he says: "Madonna Lucrezia has left the palace *insalutato hospite*, "and has gone to stay at a convent called San Sisto, where she still is. It is rumoured by some that she desires to become a nun herself, but there are a number of other rumours as well, of a nature not possible to trust to a letter."

These "other rumours" are presumably the scandals which leapt into belief after the divorce, and which Giovanni, embittered to the marrow of his bones, is credited with having started.

But the divorce obtained, a new marriage was instantly negotiated for the girl, whose ideas of customary conduct must have been so piteously topsy-turvy. The new match

contemplated was solely intended to benefit Cæsar —in it Lucrezia became purely a means of assistance. Cæsar, having renounced the priesthood after the mysterious murder of his elder brother, which had taken place while Lucrezia was in the convent, had conceived the scheme of marrying Charlotte of Aragon, and through this marriage of becoming King of Naples. Since the French invasion the present reigning dynasty crumbled visibly. Cæsar had already asked for Princess Charlotte's hand, and had been emphatically refused. It was hoped at the Vatican that Lucrezia's marriage to Charlotte's brother, Don Alphonso, would pave the way for the other and more important wedding. Lucrezia was eighteen at the time of her second marriage, and, according to the ambassador of Mantua, really in love with the handsome boy who made her Duchess of Biselli.

Unfortunately they remained in Rome, in the undesirable set Lucrezia had belonged to from babyhood, and from this time horrible scandals grew as thickly round Lucrezia as the rest of her family. According to one of them, she had given birth to an illegitimate son, by a certain favourite of Alexander's, Perotto. This unfortunate is another person whom Cæsar is credited with having

murdered. He did it apparently in the Pope's very presence, and splashed the blood all over the old man's garments. The existence of a child by Perotto is not corroborated, and the truth of later scandals, since discussed with bated breath, is less ascertainable still. At the same time, that Lucrezia should have given birth to an illegitimate baby is very feasible. In a society where lovers were more normal than husbands, it is difficult to conceive that she should have escaped with flawless, untarnished innocence—probably took a lover because she was young, affectionate, and nobody she knew thought it grievous behaviour. Nevertheless, though there is every reason for this individual scandal to have had roots in truth, the evidence for its genuineness is equally flimsy and unsupported.

For a year the Biselli marriage wore an air of ordinary successfulness. Then the politics of the Vatican veered once more, and tragically and brutally, Lucrezia's fate changed with them. Louis XII. had started the second Italian campaign, and Alexander was now upon the side of the French. Once more, therefore, the awkward factor in the situation became Lucrezia's husband. It seemed, indeed, as if she was to have a knack

of possessing awkward spouses. In this second crisis Lucrezia, however, did not wait to be warned of danger, and one day Alphonso disappeared. A Venetian writer in Rome remarks: "The Duke of Biseglia, husband of Madonna Lucrezia, has secretly fled, and is gone to Genazzano, to the Colonnas. He has left his wife six months *enceinte*, and she does nothing but cry." The statement is at last a lifting of the veil for a second from the girl's character. She loved this second husband; at the hint of danger she sent him away, but once gone she cried for him all day. This is the whole conduct-sheet of any normal, tender woman.

Alphonso wrote and urged her to follow him, but Alexander, it is said, forced her to beg Alphonso to return instead. There is some confusion at this point. Certainly, in the end, Lucrezia was sent away into the country—to Spoleto—and here, after a little while, Alphonso joined her. It was dangerous, but they were at the age when evil anticipations are sustained with an effort. It is not natural in one's teens to hold for ever a problematical foreboding. Death in fulness of physical well-being is a dark midnight possibility, not a permanent obsession for broad and cheerful daylight. Foolishly, and

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yet so naturally, their fears gradually fell away, and Cæsar Borgia being at Forli, fighting, by the following October they were back in Rome, where Lucrezia gave birth to a son, and where, for another year, they lived undisturbed, while Michelangelo was at work upon his Pieta Copernicus, and Pintorricchio continued to make pictures round the walls of the Vatican.

In 1500, the year of Alexander's jubilee, Cæsar returned, and the calamity, which had practically been a foregone conclusion for a year, came upon the Biselli household. Before it occurred, however, an incident occurred which is another strong testimony to gentleness of heart in Lucrezia. A chimney fell upon Alexander, and during his brief illness it was not his mistress, nor any of the many persons whose business it was more or less to attend to him, who undertook the nursing, but the girl Lucrezia herself. It is said the old man refused to have anybody else about him. Clearly, then, she had more tender ways, more naturally capable and patient methods, than the rest, and to a patient made herself the comfortable embodiment of motherliness, sympathy, control, and unselfishness. No woman would be clamoured for in a sick-room

who did not possess all the finer and warmer qualities of character.

Soon after this the inevitable happened. Alphonso, walking up the steps of the Vatican, was set upon by a group of masked men with daggers. Grievously wounded, he managed to tear past them into the Pope's own apartments, where Lucrezia was sitting with her father. As the bleeding man staggered into the room she fainted dead away. So would any normally tender woman, dragged suddenly from the trivial conversation into this new horror of desolation.

The dying man was put to bed, and joyfully given the last absolution. But Lucrezia, ill herself with a fever brought on by shock, made a desperate struggle to save the life belonging to her. Here again she shows as a perfectly natural woman. Driven at last into revolt by those she dared not openly defy, and heartsick, shaken, burning with terror, impotence, and distress, she yet fought them with all the pitiful means at her disposition. Nobody but herself or his sister Sancia were allowed to attend the wounded man; all his food these two cooked between them, probably with their hearts racing in perpetual fearfulness. It is said—and there seems always a vague suggestion behind these

circumstances that Alexander was a weak man in the power of Cæsar—that the Pope himself sided with the two aching, troubled women, and helped to keep dangerous persons out of the sick-room. But Alphonso once convalescent, Cæsar could not be refused admittance. He had no recognized hand in the crime; none could openly accuse him. Nevertheless, his visit accentuated sinister anticipations. After making it he remarked grimly, "What was unsuccessful at noon may be successful at night."

He took every care that it should. One evening the two women—why is difficult to understand, for both were soaked in heart-breaking suspicions—left the room for a moment. Cæsar himself must surely have seen to their absence, for instantly afterwards he slipped in with his throttler Michelletto, and in a minute or two Lucrezia was a widow. The agony, sharp enough, had at least been brief.

This time, though there is not a single intimate statement written about her, Lucrezia must have made some primary outcry, some first plaint against the cruelty of such a widowhood. The Venetian ambassador refers to trouble between Lucrezia and her father. He writes: "Madonna Lucrezia, who is generous and discreet, was

formerly in high favour with the Pope, but he seems no longer to care for her." The girl was then at Nepi. What had previously occurred no one knows, but she and her father would certainly not have fallen out if her meekness had remained predominant. Something must have overstrained docility and sent her once more out of Rome, either in a spirit of bitterness or because she exasperated those who controlled her existence.

But negotiations for a third marriage were not allowed to linger. When Cæsar had subdued the plucky and intensely wicked Catherine Sforza, and taken the town of Pesaro, Collenuccio mentions at the end of a letter, "The Pope intends to give this town as a dowry to Madonna Lucrezia, and to secure her an Italian husband who will always keep on good terms with the Valentinois. I do not know if this is the truth, but it is at least generally believed to be." In the same letter there is a sketch of Cæsar himself. Collenuccio says, "He is looked upon as brave, powerful, and generous, and they say he takes care to make much of wealthy people. He is pitiless in his vengeances; many people have told me this. He is a man with a great spirit, and set on greatness and glory, but it seems he

prefers to conquer provinces than to pacify and organize them."

Nevertheless, because the Borgia was a man with an unrelaxed purpose, he stood, even for a good many of his enemies, as a type of greatness. Machiavelli actually made him the ideal of governing princedom—the subtle combination of the lion and the fox.

Machiavelli—himself so extraordinarily interesting—belongs to the history of Florence and not to that of Rome and Alexander. He never came actually into contact with Lucrezia, but the following description of his days, when he was living on his own small estate, given in a letter to a friend, is so luminously expressive of the spirit of the age in which he and Lucrezia lived that there seems more than sufficient reason for including it. He wrote that he got up at sunrise, and after a couple of hours in the woods, where he examined the work of the previous day and chatted with the wood-cutters, he walked to a certain grove with a volume of Dante, Petrarch, or one of the Latin poets, to read. Subsequently he strolled to the inn, gossiped with the people there, and by direct intercourse with many kinds of temperaments studied human nature. For dinner, which he spoke of as being very simple

fare, he returned home; but the meal over, he made his way back to the inn, where he passed the afternoon playing at *cricca* and *tric-trac* with the host or any one else who happened to be there. It was not apparently desired to be a peaceful recreation. Machiavelli states, with a sort of cheerful glow, that they quarrelled incessantly, and shouted at each other like infuriated lunatics. But this boisterousness was for the day. When the evening came he once more went homewards, and this time, having discarded his muddy country clothes, and having dressed himself with as much care as if he were at court, he retired to his library till bedtime, and became absorbed in the works of past writers. This was in reality the intense portion of his days; all his nature, he wrote, became immersed in the joy of this intellectual companionship, everything else, every care, every thought for the present or the future, slipping away from him while he read.

Machiavelli's day contains the whole substance of Renaissance behaviour—absolute immersion of personality in fine art or good literature, and along with it the extreme of physical tempestuousness. These people almost panted with vitality; they were not yet subdued and wearied through the evil and sorrows of too many past generations.

Lucrezia, like the rest, responded to life far too instinctively to hold grief for any period. She took the interest of a giddy child in the suggestions for her third marriage, and this time Alexander had chosen Alphonso of Ferrara as the person essentially desirable. It was aiming ambitiously. The besmirched, divorced, and widowed daughter of a Pope did not constitute a suitable bride for the future Duke of Ferrara. In fact, the proposal created nothing less than a panic when laid before the chosen bridegroom and his father. Lucrezia's reputation was unspeakable.

The charge of incest was among others laid against her. It has been repeated by Macchiavelli, Guicciardini, and the poets Sanozzo and Pontanus. Nevertheless, nobody now believes it. Neither Alexander nor Cæsar's conduct makes it supposable. Secondly, all those who spread it had either personal animosity against the Borgias or repeated it solely from hearsay. The two poets, besides, were friends and subjects of the house of Aragon, and in Naples, after the murder of Alphonso, the word "Borgia" stood for abomination.

But in Ferrara the accusation was unquestioned, and Alphonso immediately and violently refused

to entertain the idea of the suggested marriage for a second. The old Duke Ercole, though no less nauseated than his son, was even more harassed and more fearsome. To offend Alexander involved the security of his duchy. To make matters worse, when the Pope's proposal reached Ferrara, other wifely negotiations had already been started with France. And suddenly all pleasant plans were made parlous and uncertain. Distressed out of circumlocution, Ercole wrote plainly and rather piteously to the French ambassador, begging that the French king would not take the side of the Pope, but would write and support him by stating, which would have been almost the truth, that another marriage had already been arranged for. The whole letter was full of stress and pleading, and though ending with the statement that consent to the union would in any case never be wrung out of him, and that in addition nothing would induce his son to take the lady, it showed in every line the anguish of a revolt that knows its own futility.

Ercole found no friend to help him. His letters, after Louis had slithered out of the responsibility of abetting him, revealed the agitation this acceptance of a virtueless future duchess caused at Ferrara. Exasperated and miserable,

he showed openly that he regarded the king's conduct as a mean refusal of good-fellowship. He gave in finally, as he was bound to do, but spoke of it with a tragic veracity as an act "postponing" the honesty of his most ancient house.

The news caused an almost outrageous joy at the Vatican, though Lucrezia's delight is perhaps the most inexplicable of the abundantly inexplicable facts of her existence. She could not have believed herself welcome, and she could not have conceived Alphonso as a genial, heart-stirring companion. He was emphatically a man satisfied with men's society. His appearance, besides, was in itself sufficient to terrorize a woman of light reputation. Lucrezia had seen him and the remorseless type of the straight, down-reaching nose, the tip almost touching the upper lip. Physically he was a fine creature, but cold suspicion glared out of him, and only excessive courage or excessive obtuseness would have dared to be wholly at ease in his presence. True, the marriage offered Lucrezia the great opportunity of her life—the opportunity to retrieve, which should follow everybody's primary misdemeanours. She rose, moreover, magnificently to the occasion, and through that fact alone made her life of deep and touching value. For no past

human backsliding should be allowed to blur the smoothness of a changed and nobler future. There is no object in life if improvement is to be hindered by cast-off failings. But though Lucrezia wiped out a bad beginning by the finest possible maintenance of contrary behaviour, she was not the woman to think of this beforehand, or to plan deeply and carefully the development of a new character. She possessed too strongly the wisdom of living in the moment, and her retrievement came, not from any long-considered purpose, but *naturally* when once removed from the constant, forceful on-thrust of evil people.

The instant the engagement had been brought about, a correspondence began between her and Ercole. Certainly men were practised liars in those days. When Ercole wrote to Cæsar Borgia accepting the proposed marriage, he stated that he did so "on account of the reverence we feel for the holiness of our Lord, and the admirable character of the most illustrious Madonna Lucrezia, but even more for the great affection we have for your Excellence."

When the marriage by proxy had taken place, he further wrote to Lucrezia herself that not only was the marriage a great happiness and comfort in his old age, but that he had loved his new

daughter-in-law from the first, both because of the exceptional goodness of her character, and because of her relationship to the Pope and to Cæsar Borgia. Just at the end a grain of truth slipped in, when he stated that he hoped that posterity through her would be assured to his house in Ferrara.

In spite of these protestations of affection, the D'Estes were anything but comfortable. What they feared is clear from a letter of the Ferrarese ambassador, written after a long interview with Lucrezia. He wrote that she showed nothing but excellent qualities, and appeared extremely modest, gracious, and decorous, as well as fervently religious. He adds, "She is very pretty, but doubly so through the charm of her manners. To be brief, her character seems to me to warrant no evil anticipations, but to raise rather the most pleasant expectations." Another writer says of her at this same period that though she was not regularly beautiful, her golden hair, white skin, and gentle manners made her a most attractive person. Also he mentions, "She is very joyous and light-hearted, and is always laughing." The radiance of a sunny temperament was in reality one of the best things she brought to her reluctant husband.

At Ferrara, Isabella of Mantua came to help

her brother to receive the Roman widow. Her letters to her husband give a graphic description of the first days of Lucrezia's third marriage. Isabella—a keen lover of admiration—was a little put out by rivalry with the new-comer. Every reference to Lucrezia holds the suspicion of a sting. Even the simple phrase, "I need not describe Lucrezia's appearance, as you have already seen her," placed in Isabella's context, conveys an unfavourable impression.

The irritation of a certain insecurity acidified opinion. Isabella was an acknowledged beauty; from babyhood she had been accustomed to be looked upon as a pearl among women. This disreputable Borgia, with hair equally as golden and with her incomparably magnificent clothes and jewellery, might produce a division of opinions. Even Isabella's own lady-in-waiting mentioned to the Marquis of Mantua that the bride was sweet and attractive in appearance. At any rate, the marchesana wrote: "Your Excellency enjoys more pleasure in being able to see our baby son every day than I am able to get out of these festivities. . . . Bride and bridegroom slept together last night, but we omitted the usual morning visit, since, to be frank, this is a very chill marriage. I think that both my

suite and I compare favourably with the rest here, and we shall, at any rate, win the prize for card-playing, Spagnali having already won 500 gold pieces off the Jew. To-day there is dancing till four o'clock, after which another play is to be given. . . ." She wrote again next day, and jealousy had evidently not been alleged in the interval. "We passed yesterday shut up in our rooms until four o'clock, as, being Friday, there was no dancing, and Madonna Lucrezia, in order to outdo the Duchess of Urbino and myself, insisted upon spending all these hours over her toilet. . . . Your Excellency has no cause to envy my presence at this wedding, for never was a more spiritless and unemotional an affair."

Isabella was a great, lusty creature, and Lucrezia a frail, slight woman, just arrived from an exhausting journey, after having been overtired before she started. If she could not charm, besides, in these first crucial days, her case was lost. Who cares at any time to champion an ugly woman with every fragment of evidence against her? But a fresh, smiling, child-like creature disarms antagonism through sheer contagion of joy. And Lucrezia, as one knows, could be like sunshine itself in her soft urbanity and good humour. She did her best to create a

pacifying impression, and succeeded. Nevertheless, the marriage remained, as Isabella had said, a cold one. The bride was so lightly thought of that not even a pretence of affection could be asked from Alphonso. Alexander himself only required that he should actually be her husband, and, satisfied upon that point, remarked to the Ferrarese ambassador, "It is true that being young he wanders here and there after pleasure during the day, but he does well."

From the first, however, Lucrezia proved herself wonderful. She had no sooner reached Ferrara than she shed the soiled Roman personality, as she might have done a dirty garment. Without slow gradations, she showed herself a pleasant, sober housewife, lacking even the self-assurance to make demands upon fidelity. Intellectually, she could not compete with Isabella of Mantua or Elizabeth of Urbino; but she had, at least, sufficient vitality of character to turn her back in one bound, as it were, on her entire past life, as if she were trying to prove herself an alien personality.

Ercole she conquered immediately. He was old, and this girl, whose coming had so agitated him, possessed a very graceful attitude towards her elders. Also he was tired, and those nearing

the tragic termination of existence are always fugitively warmed by the presence of attentive youthfulness. These two, at least, got on excellently. Once she fell ill, and had to go away for the sake of her health. During her absence the old man insisted upon receiving daily notes of her condition. They are the simplest, most disarming little letters imaginable. Of all things about Lucrezia, artfulness appears the most conspicuously absent. Her sins could never have been of the deliberate, prearranged order. She must have stumbled into them, more than anything, as a strayed, unshepherded lamb falls over a precipice.

Presently came the customary baby. It was a girl, thus thwarting the wishes of everybody. But Lucrezia knew some comfort, notwithstanding. For a time she was dangerously ill, and during this period Alphonso could hardly be drawn from her bedside. Evidently he had grown aware that she suited him, and the weak girl in her stuffy bed must have experienced an inflow of pleasure. She had not been good for nothing.

Her recovery brought her to one of the most fateful events of her fateful and dramatic existence. Alexander suddenly died. He and Cæsar had fallen ill simultaneously. Every one spoke of

poison, but Alexander's symptoms were perfectly consistent with apoplexy. His death, however, placed the new Ferrarese lady in the utmost social peril. She had become Don Alphonso's wife solely because he and Ercole deeply feared her father. Now that he was dead, nothing could be easier than to draw upon the hoard of former scandals and to repudiate her upon the strength of them. Alexander was no sooner buried, in fact, than Louis XII. remarked diplomatically to the Ferrarese ambassador, "I know you never approved of this marriage. Madame Lucrezia has never been, in fact, the wife of Don Alphonso."

Lucrezia must have grown cold with terror; but nothing calamitous occurred. Fortunately she had been given sufficient time to show *how* good she could be. By now neither Ercole nor Alphonso desired to change the gentle-mannered woman, who was needed to give an heir to the family. Her placid, light urbanity suited both, and the danger that threatened for a moment to overwhelm her drew off quietly like calm, receding waters. But in connection with it one of the principal friendships of Lucrezia's life at Ferrara comes into prominence. Bembo, at the time of her mourning—a year after her marriage—had become intimate enough to give the advice no

man troubles to offer to a woman entirely indifferent to him. He wrote, referring to Alexander's death, that having been informed that her sorrow was terrible and extreme, he had called the day before in the hope of being able, in some small degree, to comfort her. But he owned regretfully that his visit had proved useless, for he had no sooner seen her than her forlorn unhappiness, and her piteous, black draperies, had stricken him with such an overwhelming heartache, that he had been literally unable to utter a single coherent sentence. He then went on to beg her—and he wrote with a kind of tender directness—to try and control her misery, for fear, the circumstances being evidently not absolutely straightforward, it should be thought she wept less for her father than for the possible insecurity of her present position. He reminded her gently that this was not the first dire calamity that a harsh fate had thrust upon her, and in some admirably sincere phrases he practically beseeched her, for her own sake, to show a brave and composed demeanour. He closed the letter by an almost ingratiating apology for having said so much, and with the request—so customary with a man in love—that she should take every care of her health.

Apart from the distress at seeing Lucrezia unhappy, the second part of the letter shows a man who had received confidences. Lucrezia's version—perhaps the true one—of the turbid past, was to some extent in his keeping, and he gave her what warning he could to save her from adding to her present precarious position in Ferrara.

The friendship of these two is another of the uncertainties in which everything intimately concerning Lucrezia lies. It has been dragged unnecessarily into a false appearance of shadiness. A lock of her hair was found among a packet of her letters to him, and though it is extremely doubtful that the hair could have been hers even, the intimacy because of it was immediately regarded as having passed the bounds of virtue. Yet why should a lock of hair incriminate anybody? The desire to soften the pains they see is strong in all mothering women. Lucrezia wore her hair about her shoulders; scissors must have been conveniently near owing to the amount of needlework done at that period. Bembo, then a young man, was also for a time very much in love, therefore capable of little sentimental comforts. A woman's hair is a fragment of her very personality. To grant a boon like that,

SUSSANAH AND THE ELDERS

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under circumstances of such facility, would need merely a softened or impulsive moment. Lucrezia, besides, with a husband absorbed in the manufacture of explosives, may reasonably have been a little grateful that somebody at least loved her.

There is no habit so pernicious as that of deducing evil from trivial whimsicalities. No judgment that is unaware of the inner subtleties —the whole complex growth of any given circumstance—does aright to suppose harmfulness. A lock of hair may be the result of sheer frowardness, or it may be the outcome of the most unaccompanied compassion: it may be the meaningless consequence of sudden unconsidered laughter, or the proffered comfort of a heart with nothing else to offer. But in all cases it is entirely destitute, by itself, of anything justifying a condemnatory construction.

Bembo is too well known among Renaissance celebrities to need personal explanations. Vasari says of him: "The Italians cannot be sufficiently thankful to Bembo for having not only purified their language from the rust of ages, but given it such regularity and clearness that it has become what we see." Few men have known a life of more sustained triumph. At the time of his friendship with Lucrezia he was young

—a good-looking man of about twenty-eight—but already he had attained a widespread appreciation.

He was not the only clever man in the duchess's society at Ferrara; the traditions of the house were intellectual. Lucrezia, at last, had fallen into excellent hands, and was being formed in the best school possible. Men, notable not only for genius, but for serious qualities of temperament, educated her by companionship. Bembo, Castiglione, Aldo Manuce, were all men who thought with some profundity and breadth. Ariosto, from 1503 in the service of Hippolyte D'Este, was another man of genius she must have known intimately, and among minor intellects the two Strozzi poets, as well as Tebaldeo and Callagnini, sang her praises from personal acquaintance.

It was not altogether, however, an easy-minded society. Alphonso, though he mixed little with his wife's *entourage*, formed a constantly dangerous background to it. His suspicions were always alert. The murder of the poet Strozzi is put down to him, and in 1505 Tebaldeo wrote to Isabella: "This duke hates me, though I do not know why, and it is not safe for me to stay in the town." Even Bembo, in his relations

to his friend, had to be girded with the uttermost caution, and finally for him also it became unadvisable to remain longer in Ferrara. With his going one of the most delicate affections of Lucrezia's life fell to pieces. And yet not altogether; Bembo, though he took mistresses he loved to distraction, continued for fifteen years to correspond with his Ferrarese duchess. Unless their friendship had been very real and very rich in sincerities, it would have crumbled into nothingness within a year.

Lucrezia's intimacy with Castiglione was a slighter affair. He had no importance in her life, save as being among those who helped to give her culture. That she should have known him is interesting, however, because in his great book Castiglione expressed with a limpid particularity the Renaissance ideal of womanhood. On the whole it was an unimaginative conception —at least expressed as Castiglione expressed it. For no book ever avoided more completely than "The Courtier" any obliqueness or any individual frankness of idiosyncrasy. Tact, according to Castiglione, was the essential mainspring of feminine fascination—tact and the art of conversation. One wise point he insisted upon—suavity. That, he said, should be inseparable

from every woman's society. The remark lingers in the memory,—suavity, a soft and soothing composure, having so nearly passed out of even the conception of good manners. Scandals, especially of her own sex, it was unpardonable for a woman either to utter or to attend to. Dancing and other accomplishments he urged as a necessary part of education; but, on the other hand, he did not encourage naturalness. He wrote: "When she cometh to dance or to show any kind of music, she ought to be brought to it with suffering herself somewhat to be prayed, and with a certain bashfulness that may declare the noble shamefastness that is contrary to headiness." The early Victorian code of good manners was therefore only a return to a former fashion, and a fashion instigated by men and not by women at all.

Castiglione wrote at length upon the question of dress. Here his common sense is unimpeachable: "Women ought to have a judgment to know what manner of garments set her out best, and be most fit for the exercise she intendeth to undertake at that instant, and with them array herself." He urged keenly that lean and fat should pay attention to their peculiarities. Every woman, he insisted, ought to do all

in her power to keep herself "cleanly and handsome."

Upon the subject of morality, Castiglione possessed no grave feelings. He advocated virtue, but not because conduct is vital, far-reaching, touching momentarily the character and fate of so many besides the doer, but almost entirely on account of the greater safety attaching to circumspection. Intrigue involved so many dangers. Consequently, he urged women "to be heedful, and remember that men with less jeopardy show to be in love than women." He begged a woman to "give her lover nothing but her mind when either hatred of her husband or the love he beareth to others inclineth her to love." Words were so much vapour, but a definite action was perilously apt to produce definite consequences. Husbands had a knack of revenging in their own wives what they asked from the wives of others.

A quaint and almost subtle stipulation ends the list. The perfect lady, according to Castiglione, "must not only be learned, but able to devise sports and pastimes." All active brains need rest. The desirable woman should know, in consequence, how to relax the tension of absorbing thoughts, as well as how to tender the

encouragement of sympathy. Health demands some intervals for relaxation and foolishness.

Castiglione himself married a child called Ippolyta Torelli, whose life was tragically brief. As a husband, nothing is known of him except that he was a good deal away from home. His wife wrote *one* exquisite letter—one loves her because of it—and that is practically all that remains of their domestic existence. The note was written just before her death, which took place through the birth of her third child. She lay in bed, and put on paper—

"My dear Husband,

"I have given birth to a little girl, which I do not think you will be displeased to hear. I have suffered this time much more than before, and I have had three bad bouts of fever. But now I am better, and hope to suffer no more pain. I will not write more to you lest I overtax my strength. But with all my heart I commend myself to your lordship.

"In Mantua, the 20th of August, 1520.

"Your wife, who is a little weary with pain."

The caressing prettiness of the last phrase is like the feel of a tired child's hand slipped into

one's own. Castiglione felt her death acutely, and wrote that he never dreamt his wife, whom he referred to with great tenderness, would have died before him, and all he now prayed for was that the Almighty might not leave him long before he followed her.

Lucrezia needed friends at Ferrara. Her life was one almost without respite from harassments, internal troubles and political insecurity being always present. Plague and famine devastated the well-being of the duchy. Twice Lucrezia was left in charge of a famine-stricken district, and twice proved herself capable, resourceful, self-forgetting. On the first occasion she was ill, but, notwithstanding, absolutely refused to leave the town as ordered by the doctors. She worked for the unhappy people starving about her, in a flaming rush of pity. Jews and Christians were alike to Lucrezia; her protection of Jews was strenuous in a period when the mere name roused men's ferocity. That her heart throbbed in response to the right instincts is proved by the whole compassionate fabric of her later life. Any human being, intuitively conscious that pain equalizes all things, cannot be encased in the callousness of the really bad or cold nature. During all the years Lucrezia lived in Ferrara

her care for charitable institutions was personal and active.

And it should be remembered that philanthropy had not yet become a fashionable occupation; sympathy of attitude by those in high places was still unusual and undemanded. The management of the few existing charitable houses during the Renaissance was deplorable. But Alphonso and Lucrezia not only built a new and improved hospital for infectious diseases, but took, besides, sufficient personal interest in its patients to dismiss a man for neglecting the invalids entrusted to his care.

This phase of Lucrezia's life ought to be dwelt upon at length. It lifts her from a flighty extravagance and immorality into positive goodness of behaviour. Depth she probably had not —deep, brooding persons are not necessary in great abundance—and the woman who left her only child, the son of the murdered Don Alphonso, could not have been fiercely tenacious of heart. In all Lucrezia's life, in fact, this is the worst incident—this abandonment of her baby. So much was thrust upon her; this surrender itself was so to a certain extent. But not the manner of it, the effortless blitheness, the impulsive acquiescence. It is this one revealing episode

that chiefly keeps her from the region of supremely wronged and tragic persons.

In 1507 her brother Cæsar died. Alphonso was away at the time, fighting with Louis XII. A letter, despatched at once, told him how she took the news. According to the writer, "she showed great grief, but with constancy and without tears." This phrase "without tears" carries a certain poignant implication. Surely the hearer was at last sinking through shallowness to find some deep places in her nature. Shallowness can always shed tears. Had Lucrezia even been indifferent to Cæsar's death—and indifference is the least likely sensation—shallowness would have dropped a few tears of excitement, silliness, shock. There is a moving weariness of grief in any tearless conduct.

Isabella D'Este, who was with her at the time, wrote as well. She said that Lucrezia "immediately went to the monastery of the Corpo di Cristo, to offer up prayers for his soul. At the monastery she remained for two nights, and having left it, she found herself so much indisposed that her physician, for security, insisted on her keeping her bed, to which she is still confined."

Lucrezia had several children after her third

marriage, and in the year following Cæsar's death she gave birth to the desired heir, Ercole, afterwards to marry the poor, cheerless Renée of France. But she had been a delicate, frail creature all her life, and when, in 1519, she gave birth to a dead child, the case immediately became hopeless. As a Roman Catholic, she was told at once how near Death loomed, though the information seems a cruel thing to give to any person not yet old enough to have wearied of existence. But Lucrezia, who had never yet made a fuss about anything, did not make a fuss over the last great unpleasantness of all. This composure at dying touches all her past serenity with something almost effulgent. It makes her suddenly full of strange wisdom and singular comprehensions; as if unconsciously she understood the real value of individual mortality, and knew it just sweet enough for smiles and laughter, but at the same time too slight, unstable, and finite for great commotions or disturbances.

Having been told that she could not live any longer, and seeing Alphonso suddenly attentive, the exhausted woman wasted no strength contesting the unalterable, but simply lay quietly in her bed and tried to think of God, the Virgin,

and the world beyond. A few days before her death she wrote to Pope Leo X. Her letter is sedateness itself and courage. Nothing was further from its utterance than discomposure or demur. If forlornness reached her at leaving the lovely homeliness of mortal life, she was too magnanimously courteous to burden another person with a private sorrow. She wrote—

"MOST HOLY FATHER AND WORSHIPFUL LORD,

"With all reverence I kiss your Holiness's feet, and humbly commend myself to your good will. Having been in great pain for more than two months, early on the morning of the 14th day of the present month, according to the will of God, I gave birth to a little daughter. I hoped then to get alleviation from my sufferings, but the contrary took place, and I have to pay my debt to nature. And through the grace of God I am conscious that the end of my life is near, and that in a few hours, having received the holy sacraments of the Church, I shall have passed away. And having came to this state, as a Christian, although a sinner, I beseech your Holiness in your goodness to give me from the heavenly treasures spiritual consolation and your holy benediction for my soul. This I most

devoutly pray for, and to your great mercy I commit my husband and my children, who are all faithful servants of your Holiness.

"In Ferrara, the 22nd of June, 1519, at the fourteenth hour.

"Your Holiness's humble servant,

"LUCREZIA DA ESTE."

No braver letter, nor one more touching in its noble staidness of expression, was ever written by a woman, knowing that in a few hours life would have ceased for her. Two days after writing it she died, and Alphonso wrote after her death that it was hard to face the loss of so sweet a companion, the gentleness of her conduct having made the bond between them a very close and tender one. No single individual can possess the whole round of virtues—a fact too often ignored in current judgment of character—but every writer lingered upon Lucrezia's gentleness. There is no more winning thing than a gentle woman. Persistent gentleness not only excludes harsh thoughts, but is a force constantly wooing men out of turbulent bitterness and acrimony of spirit.

Alphonso fainted at his wife's funeral, and nothing could protest more eloquently against

assertions of her wickedness. Grim men of Alphonso's fibre do not, after nine years of marriage, faint for a woman who has not known how to bring to life the softer undergrowths of character. Lucrezia must have possessed a more than normal degree of conciliatory seduction. And she charms still, in spite of much calumniating gossip, not only because she expressed undeviatingly the heartening value of good cheer, and set so fine an example of how to discard bad yesterdays, but to a certain extent because, as far as one knows, she babbled nothing for biographers to seize upon, and so left herself perpetually among the engrossing enigmas of European history.

MARGARET D'ANGOULÊME

1492–1549

THE Renaissance in France has not the same degree of charm as the Renaissance in Italy. It misses the radiance and the sense of open-air sweetness that clings to the original movement. The women of the Italian Renaissance were constantly adventuring into the country; the enchantment of the climate lingers in all recollections of them. The Renaissance in France conveys a different impression—one colder, more troubled, more half-hearted. The large frescoed palaces, with their adorable colonnades, are gone, and the sensation given is of a bleaker, darker, and more housed existence. The entranced light-heartedness of the Italian period did not travel into France. When the Renaissance came into that country the Reformation came too, and the labours of the Sorbonne robbed it of the youth and irresponsibility that made the other so vital and complete. The

Italian Renaissance breathed out the exultation of adolescence; the French, the reflectiveness of maturity.

Of the French Renaissance, Margaret D'Angoulême is the central female figure. She was born on April 11, 1492, when her mother, Louise de Savoie, was only fifteen. Louise had been a poor relation at court before she married, and her aunt, Anne of Beaujeu, had arranged her marriage. Louise de Savoie was among the women who had not been given a fair start in life. The bridegroom, Charles D'Angoulême, had already an attachment; he loved greatly a certain Jeanne de Polignac. He did his best not to marry Louise, and so remain unharassed in the service of his lady friend. But Anne de Beaujeu was very masterful, and Charles surrendered through necessity. He married Louise, then a child of twelve, and made Jeanne de Polignac one of her ladies-in-waiting.

When Louise was fifteen, Margaret was born, and two years afterwards, Francis—"My Cæsar, my lord"—came into the world. A year later Louise's husband died. She mentions the fact in her journal without expressions of regret. Not but that she had been happy enough in his lifetime. Charles, absorbed by his own love affairs,

allowed his wife moderate freedom to indulge in hers. But his death made such amusements less anxious and more easy. The complaisance of husbands has always an element of uncertainty.

There was another trait in Louise's character to which her husband's death gave fuller scope—her ardent maternal instincts. The quality of her love for her children was vehement, jealous, and primitive. Margaret, as a result of this, became educated in an atmosphere unusual at that period. An indulged tenderness steeped her juvenile days in pleasantness. There were no severities at Cognac. Of Francis, Louise made an idol, but Margaret, though trained from the days she could lisp to worship this idol along with her mother, was also herself a treasured person. The glow of these early days left their influence upon her for a lifetime. She never shook off the warmliness of heart all her upbringing had encouraged.

Upon Louise's widowhood, Louis XII. was for a short time very kind to her and to her children. This mood suddenly changed—in a few days, it is said—and a certain Jean de St. Gelais, a friend of Louise's, is credited with having caused the alteration. Louise was ordered

to retire to the castle of Blois, and there was talk of taking the children away from her. In the end, the Marechale de Gie, whose tragic downfall has been told in the life of Anne, was given practical control of her household. His first act—presumably under Louis's orders—consisted in the dismissal of St. Gelais. It was this action which Louise is supposed never to have forgiven. De Gie became her most devoted supporter; all his interests were on the same side as hers, all his aims were to place Francis subsequently upon the throne of France. But when the catastrophe of Anne's luggage occurred, Louise flung the weight of her evidence remorselessly against him, and lied with a sinister heartiness.

At Blois, Margaret was brought up with boys. A number of *pages d'honneur* were being educated with the heir-presumptive. Margaret grew to know at an early age a good deal about the temperaments of the other sex, and a good deal about flirtation. At nine years old she went through her first love affairs. No wonder that later she knew, as Brantome put it, more about the art of pleasing (*galanterie*) than her daily bread.

The playfellow to whom Margaret lost her

childish heart was the fascinating Gaston de Foix, but there were several others among her brother's pages who were momentous in her after existence. There was, for instance, Charles de Montpensier, afterwards Connétable de Bourbon, whom Louise de Savoie, by unduly persecuting—it is said because he refused to marry her—drove to the side of Charles V. Of this Connétable, Henry VIII. of England made a shrewd observation when he saw him at the Field of the Cloth of Gold. "If he was a subject of mine," he said, "he would not keep his head." There was also, among the pages at Blois, Anne de Montmorency, for whom Margaret's friendship continued long after both were grown up. He owed his subsequent position in a large measure to her assistance, but desirous of possessing the supreme influence over Francis himself, he grew to hate the woman who also possessed so much. The unworthy termination of the friendship began in the light-hearted childhood at Blois — it was Montmorency who made the famous remark to Francis: "If your majesty wants to rid the country of heretics, you must begin with your own sister"—which was among the sharpest disillusions of Margaret's existence.

But as a child her affection for Montmorency

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HEAD OF GASTON DE FOIX

was as nothing to the adoration she felt for the gentle, endearing Gaston, who could do everything well, and whose manners won people's hearts perpetually. Unfortunately, at ten Margaret was marriageable, and she had no sooner reached that age than Louis XII. tried to arrange a marriage for her with the English Prince of Wales—afterwards Henry VIII. Happily, Henry wanted some one nearer the throne than a cousin, and the little group at Blois remained unbroken. But the question of marriage was always in the air—the sense that the enfolded home life might cease at any moment could never be entirely shaken off. Later, Margaret narrowly escaped another English husband. Henry VII., then an old widower, wanted a second wife. He made a formal proposal for Louise. She refused point-blank, and the ambassador then asked for the daughter. This was accepted, and arrangements were in progress, when Margaret herself suddenly set everybody agape by declining an old and decrepid husband. The marriage came to nothing, though probably not because of the small girl's protest; there were political reasons against it as well.

Meanwhile, Margaret's childish lover, Gaston, had left the château at Blois. The modest-

mannered boy, known familiarly as "the Dove," had gone to take up a man's business, leaving his little weeping friend behind him. But Margaret had grown by now into an interesting-looking girl. Her face, at the age of sixteen, must have been singularly arresting. She had the charm that is rarest of all—the charm of strangeness. Her appearance was not like other people's. The portrait of her, painted when she was about twenty, leading Francis to the crucified Christ, is full of subtleties. The face is round, with the sweet fulness of young things, but the chin is tiny, lovable, incongruous—the chin of soft assents and surrenders. The nose is long, the over-long nose of Francis I.; the mouth deliciously curved and tender. All the lower half of the face expresses a desire for gentle pleasures and soft and caressing habits. But the eyes belong to a different temperament. They gaze out of the happy face with unexpected wistfulness and mysticism. Their expression is almost tired, as if so many difficult matters had vexed their understanding that they were weary before their time. The preoccupied eyes, the love-needing chin, the long, cold nose, and the charming outline of the head, make an extraordinary combination.

Every contemporary writer agreed that

Margaret had the gift of fascination, and she had also in youth the kind of looks that linger in the imagination. It is, consequently, not surprising that while she sighed for the absent Gaston, some one else should have sighed for her. This second love affair is one of the interesting experiences of Margaret's life ; it is rich in information about Margaret, about Louise, about the habits and customs of Margaret's times. Using fictitious names, she tells it herself, as well as her early affection for Gaston, in the "Heptameron." Bonnivet was a lieutenant when he first saw Margaret, and he fell in love with her immediately. Immediately also he set himself to try and arouse a corresponding emotion. She was a princess, and he was a simple gentleman of good family ; marriage was out of the question. But one could live without marriage, and Bonnivet set to work instantly to realize a plan by which he could remain permanently near his enticing lady. There was a rich and ugly heiress who lived close to the castle of Amboise, and whose parents belonged to the royal circle. Bonnivet made love to her and married her. To further facilitate his own reception at the castle, his brother about this time received a post in Louise's household. Bonnivet then saw Margaret

constantly. The girl considered herself forlorn. Her round blue eyes were plaintive under their first experience of a heartache. Bonnivet, fascinating and determined, became her friend. She confided to him all her innocent little love-story. He took the part of sympathizer. Margaret could never hate any one who liked her, and she was at the age when to be loved easily stirs a vague and evanescent fluttering.

Presently Bonnivet had to go away also—Louis was at war with Italy—and for two years Margaret saw nothing of either Gaston or her newer comrade. When Bonnivet returned he was warmly welcomed at the castle of Amboise. But apparently—it may have been a ruse—he had come back visibly dejected through the weight of some great sorrow. Margaret commenced to ask questions. This was clearly only out of a desire for flirtation, for Bonnivet's feelings had never known secrecy, and Margaret was more than ordinarily intelligent. One day they leant together at one of the windows of the castle. Bonnivet ceased to talk of Gaston, and confessed the reason of his own melancholy. Having done so, he stated that he must go away. Margaret—to suspect that she enjoyed all this is unavoidable—replied that there was no need,

"she trusted utterly in his honour, she was not angry at all;" which last statement, at any rate, strikes one as being unmistakably accurate.

The confession, nevertheless, was an error. Margaret wanted to be loved, and she adored the glow of a sentimental friendship. But Bonnivet desired more than this, and showed that he did. The situation lost its grace and easiness. The girl found herself pressed by an emotion tired of simple playfulness; she grew uncomfortable, and Bonnivet, seeing that the situation had become untenable, went away. A wise, grave woman would have let him stay away. It is part of Margaret's appeal to us that she was never entirely sensible. She liked Bonnivet, and she felt that a young creature left destitute of love has lost a large part of the exquisiteness of youth. Gaston had faded by now into a sentimental and rather plaintive memory; she wrote, therefore, to Bonnivet to come back. Away among other women he could not be trusted to remain the same—he was one of those who love vehemently and often. He came in answer to her call, but shortly afterwards another Italian expedition removed him once more from her influence. In this war he was taken prisoner, and Margaret is said to have both fasted and gone pilgrimages in

order to win God into releasing the prisoner. She had also promised him before he left that wherever she went after her marriage she would take his wife as one of her ladies, thereby assuring a re-meeting.

And marriage had become at last unavoidable. The Duc D'Alençon had asked the king and queen for her hand, and she had refused so many husbands that it was impossible to continue obdurate. Margaret hung back, but could not ultimately resist the wishes of the king, and though it is said she declared that she would rather have had death instead, the marriage took place at the court of Anne and Louis on October 9, 1509.

The match was in all ways unsuitable. The Duc D'Alençon was good-looking, but invertebrate, jealous, and very stupid. This was exactly the type of character to depress Margaret, who at seventeen—or, for that matter, all her life—showed herself an ardent seeker after a cheerful way of living. The mystic strain in her temperament was involuntary. She troubled about the soul, death, and the after life because she could not help herself; questions of conduct and the future came unasked, and shook her with uncontrollable distresses. But of her own desires she

was all in tune with the Renaissance. She says of herself that "she was *de moult joyeuse vie*," and her contemporaries bear her out in the statement.

Life at Alençon proved more than uncongenial to her. Separated from her mother and Francis, the two people Margaret loved best in the world, and from all congenial society, the girl fretted visibly. It was at this time that, in her correspondence with the Bishop of Meaux, she called herself "worse than dead."

But her love-story with Bonnivet was far from being terminated. Some time after her marriage, when Margaret, her husband, and her mother-in-law were together, Bonnivet once more returned from foreign service. He at once went to Alençon, presumably to see his wife. Margaret watched him arrive from an upper window, for fear that in the brusqueness of a sudden meeting she might betray the tumult of her heart. It had been left to grow so cold, this little hot heart, since her marriage. They met, and when they were alone she slipped back joyfully into the old habit of confidence. She told him about her marriage, she talked of Gaston, and cried. Bonnivet grew hopeful that she loved him, when a sudden untoward event once more flung them apart. Bonnivet's wife died; he had no longer

any excuse for hanging about Margaret's person. The king also sent orders for his departure. But this renewed separation—his lady had grown more than ever seductive and engrossing—affected his health. He fell ill and took to his bed.

Margaret—for the age permitted these acts of intimate graciousness—went to pay him a visit. He looked so ill that she cried once more. They both cried, and the girl, whose instincts were always mothering, put her arms round her ailing friend. Intelligence should have warned her against the action. But Margaret, whose intelligence was so markedly above the average, seldom used it when love scenes were in question—they fascinated her too much. Bonnivet lost his head, and his visitor, frightened, began to scream. Plain speaking had grown unavoidable. The invalid urged her loveless marriage, his own despair and constancy. Margaret became sad and reproachful. "In her sorrow," she said wistfully, "she had thought to have found a friend." They separated for the third time; after which, Margaret did nothing but cry for several days.

After further fighting, Bonnivet received a post at home. The Duchesse D'Alençon had gone to pay a visit to her mother, and Bonnivet knew that Louise was his friend—she hated anybody,

it would seem, to be more fastidious than herself upon questions of morality. One evening, when passing upon state business, he asked permission to call, and Louise at once told her daughter to be ready when sent for. Margaret knew the disposition of her mother; instead of obeying, she ran to the castle chapel, and prayed, with all her heart flowing into the words upon her lips, for the help of Heaven. She did more; she took a stone and tore her face with it until the cheeks were swollen and scratched and bleeding. The action is wholly beautiful. No girl disfigures and hurts herself unless driven by a fundamental instinct of the soul into an extremity for salvation. Margaret was afraid—terribly afraid. She liked Bonnivet, she hated her husband, and she was not made of stone; after all, she was the daughter of Louise and Charles of Savoie, and the sister of Francis. But she wanted more ardently to be good than anything, and she knew no surer way than this to defend herself while the youth ran so hot in her pulsing body.

Louise found her torn and bleeding, but remained inexorably upon the side of unrighteousness. The girl's face having been hastily attended to, she was sent straight into the presence of Bonnivet. The naïve grace of the action

demanded, in truth, a more pitiful generation than Margaret's for appreciation. Her little hands were roughly seized, and the scene developed into an inexcusable and ungentle struggle.

Margaret screamed for her mother. Louise, who was undisturbedly holding her usual evening court, had in the end to go to them. Embarrassing explanations brought the incident to a close, but there is no doubt that Margaret once more wept a good deal. Louise was very angry, and in refusing to have Bonnivet as a lover, the Duchesse D'Alençon lost her friend. She had to go back to the chill life of her husband's court with the one soft thread drawn out of existence. But when it came to more than words—Margaret had no prejudices of speech—she never made vital mistakes. Conduct was the one ultimate test by which the mystery of life became beautiful and tranquillizing.

For six years Margaret lived at Alençon, and it is said that her mystical and Protestant sympathies were principally developed in these years. But there is very little known of this period, and nothing that is at all intimate. She emerged into prominence only from the year 1515, when Louise wrote in her journal, "The first day of November, 1515, my son was King of France."

This event brought some improvement into Margaret's life. Francis cared for both his mother and sister; nobody flattered him with the same undoubted sincerity as these two. After his accession the Duchesse D'Alençon was often with her brother's court at Paris. But the intervals between these visits were still dull and melancholy. Her famous correspondence with the Bishop of Meaux, Guillaume Briconnet, could not have commenced until some five years after her brother's accession, when Martin Luther had uprisen to preach against the Pope. These letters are steeped in complainfulness. Written from Alençon, they read as the letters of a young person—unhappy, but not too unhappy to make a sort of pretty plaintiveness out of melancholy. Questions of the soul had begun to vex her. According, also, to the new and curiously convincing doctrines, it was not so easy to elude punishment for this life's licences as the priests protested. The new theories found obscure, hesitant acquiescences in her own intelligence. Their spiritual clearness possessed a renewing freshness after the iniquities into which the old religion had fallen. Margaret was insatiably curious; she craved to know everything, and when she started her correspondence with

Briconnet—at that time sympathetic to the new religion—she both desired more knowledge of the Lutheran doctrine, and some one who could attune conflicting uncertainties.

The correspondence is extraordinary. Briconnet—impassioned of complexity in style—was half the time not comprehensible. In answer to some letter of Margaret's dealing with spiritual bewilderments, he wrote to her: "The extent of your kingdom's goods and honours should be a voice to stimulate, and a great breath to light a torrent of fire of love for God. Alas, madam, I fear that it is in some uneasiness; for, as Jeremiah said, the bellows that should light the fire has failed—*defect sufflatorium in igne!* . . . Madam, who is deserted in a desert, in a desert is lost, seeking solitude and cannot find it; and when he finds it is then prevented, is a bad guide to guide others out of the desert and lead them to the desired desert. The desert starves them with mortal hunger, even though they should be full up to the eyes, sharpening desire only to satiate it, and impoverish him to hunger."

Margaret could make no sense of this. She wrote back humorously—nobody was more quickly moved to laughter—"The poor wanderer cannot understand the good which is to be found in the

desert for lack of knowing she is benighted there. I pray you that in this desert, out of affection and pity, you will not hasten forwards so swiftly that you cannot be followed, in order that the abyss, through the abyss which you invoke, may not engulf the poor wanderer."

But the request for clarity passed unheeded. Briconnet seized the word "abyss," and the following paragraph was his answer. I give it in the original French, as translation is almost impossible. "*L'Abysme, qui tout abysme présent, pour en le désabysment l'abysmes en l'abysme* (*sans l'abysmes*). *Auquel abysme est fond sans fond voie des errants*," etc.

Margaret must have abandoned hope of enlightenment; but Briconnet, happily, had intelligible intervals. When he chose he could write with the same lucidity as other people. Once, for instance, after Margaret had written more sadly than usual, he replied sensibly enough: "Madame, you write to me to have pity on you because you are lonely. I do not accept this proposition. Who lives in the world and has her heart in it remains alone through being badly accompanied. But she whose heart sleeps to the world and lives for the gentle and debonnair Jesus, lives in all that is necessary, and certainly

is not alone." Margaret refused to respond to this; she had such need of men and women, of friendship, of intellectual friction, of a perpetual output of loving-kindnesses. She wrote again to Briconnet, saying, "It is so cold—one's heart is frozen;" and signed herself, "Worse than dead."

Briconnet may have been moved; young women should not be neglected and unhappy. But he remained sensible, and reproved the method of signature. Then Margaret, with a defiant meekness, signed her next letter, "Worse than ill."

This humorous docility shows that the depression she complained of was not yet grief—merely the illusive melancholy of juvenility. After the days of Alençon there was no repetition of it. Youth once traversed, the realities of death, of irretrievable sorrow—nothing is irretrievable until thirty—put an end to imaginative melancholy. Conscious of the familiar agonies always so close, the intelligent grow to hug what gaiety they can. Certainly there is no longer the playfulness in regard to sorrow, to sign "Worse than death" in a mood of amused defiance.

Some time before Francis started upon the disastrous Italian campaign, Margaret went through the last episode in her love-story with

Bonnivet. Except for the light it throws upon the morals of the period, it would be as well omitted; and but for Monsieur de Claviere's assertion of its veracity, one would gladly leave the story at its last dramatic moment. Bonnivet had married again, and during one of Margaret's visits to Paris he invited royalty to pay a visit at his estate in the country, in order to take part in a great hunt he had organized. Margaret gives in the "Heptameron" a very full account of what occurred; but, condensed, it comes to this —that Bonnivet, having previously made a trap-door for the purpose, penetrated one night into the princess's bedroom. This time Margaret did not scratch her own face, but her adversary's. Before her lady-in-waiting rushed into the room, and her conscienceless admirer fled back through the carefully arranged trap-door, Bonnivet's appearance had been rudely disfigured. He could not appear next day; it was necessary to plead illness to avoid unanswerable questions, and Margaret never saw him again. He was killed at the battle of Pavia. They had fought, but she grieved at his death, and to the end of her life loved to talk of him as one dear and tender in her memory.

Among other friends of this period, the poet

Marot ought to be included. Marot's father, also a poet, had been attached first to the court of Anne, and then to that of Francis. Marot himself had been brought up in an atmosphere of royalty. He was an interesting personality—incurably light and incurably honest. His poetry, of which Sainte Beuve remarked that good manners in poetry were born with him, was never deep, but always fascinating, natural, light-hearted. He wrote many verses to Margaret, in the gay and witty manner which was peculiarly his own. An excellently condensed impression of Margaret's temperament is given in the following lines :—

" Tous deux aimons la musique chantes,
Tous deux aimons les livres fréquenter,
Tous deux aimons d'aucun ne médire,
Tous deux aimons un meilleur propos dire,
Tous deux aimons gens pleins d'honnêtete.
. . . . . .
Tous deux aimons a visites les heux
On ne sont point gens mélancoleux
Que diraj plus? Ce mot, la dire j'ore
Je le disaj ! Que presque en toute chose,
Nous ressemblons, fois que j'ai plus d'envoi,
Et que tu as le cœur plus dur que moi."

As a personality, Marot only came into prominence later, when the religious persecutions had begun. He leant towards Lutheranism, and Margaret had twice to save him from the sinister machinery of the Sorbonne. Later still, after her

second marriage, she sheltered him at Navarre, and when even that became a place of doubtful security, she sent him to Renée in Ferrara. To translate Clement Marot's poetry is to destroy all impression of its delicate and witty pleasantness. The following example is typical of his manner at its lightest. They are verses to

"UNE DEMOISELLE MALADE.

"Ma Mignonne,
Je vous donne
Le bon jour.
Le séjour
C'est prison.
Guerison
Recouvrez,
Puis ouvrez
Vostre porte,
Et qu'on sorte
Vistement.
Car Clement
Je vous mande
Va, friande
De ta bouche
Qui se couche
En danger
Pour manger
Confitures.
Si tu dures
Trop malade
Couleur fade
Tu prendras.
Et perdras
L'Embonpoint.
Dieu te doint
Santé bonne
Ma Mignonne."

It was characteristic of a strain of cheerful callousness in the poet to tell his friend that to continue ill would be to lose the pretty plumpness which made her so attractive.

In 1524, Francis started to reconquer Milan, and from that time a great change came into Margaret's way of life. When he went, her husband went with him; also Bonnivet, Anne de Montmorency, and many others who were her friends. Margaret then moved to Paris to keep her mother company; also the poor queen Claude, who was in the last stages of consumption, and who died before Francis had gone far upon his journey. The disaster of Pavia came as an almost inconceivable blow to those in Paris. Francis was the prisoner of Charles V., and it was said the calamity had taken place, to a great extent, owing to the stupidity of Margaret's husband, who, as leader of the vanguard, had failed to come to the king's rescue. La Palice, Bayaret, and Bonnivet, among her friends also, were dead, and Marot and Montmorency were prisoners. In reference to Palice's death some ridiculous verses were sung in the streets by the people—

"Hélas, La Palice est mort,
Il est mort devant Parie.
Hélas, s'il n'etait pas mort
Il serait encore en vie."

From the moment of Francis's capture Margaret commenced a correspondence of almost impassioned tenderness with him and about him. The poet Dr. Bellay refers to Margaret, Louise, and Francis as one heart in three bodies, and they were known as The Trinity, Margaret, upon one occasion, referring to herself as the last corner in it. She wrote to Francis, after he had been taken to Madrid: "If I can be of service to you, even to the scattering of the ashes of my bones to the winds, nothing will be amiss, difficult, or painful, but consolation, repose, and honour."

The next incident was to fling Margaret upon the colossal failure of her life. Charles V. would agree to no terms of peace in which Francis did not surrender Burgundy as well as all claims to Milan and Naples. Francis was willing to give up claim to the last two places, but to relinquish Burgundy, which meant giving up a slice of France, was out of the question.

Margaret had meanwhile become a widow. The Duc D'Alençon died shortly after the disaster of Pavia—it is said, in a great measure, from want of will to live. Everybody—including his wife—looked upon him with abhorrence, since he had been, in some measure, responsible for

the capture of the king. The knowledge helped to destroy vitality, though, in the end, Margaret nursed and coddled and forgave him, as she ought to have done—the ultimate necessity for every woman being to possess the power to forgive interminably.

But D'Alençon was scarcely cold before Louise de Savoie offered Charles V. Margaret's hand, and proposed Charles's sister, the widowed Queen of Portugal, as wife for Francis. Margaret, however, was not to feel flattered at any period of her acquaintance with the self-contained Spaniard. He took no notice of Louise's proposal as regards her daughter. Nevertheless, when Margaret started upon her famous embassy to Spain, there was in the minds of all those concerned the almost secure anticipation that her personal enticement would have a good deal of influence in bringing about a swift and satisfactory release of the French prisoners.

Neither Margaret nor her counsellors knew anything of the nature of the man she had gone to deal with. A woman was the last person to negotiate successfully with the suspicious and comprehending emperor. From the first he was opposed to her coming. His opinion, and that of his entourage, is frankly expressed by the English

ambassador at the Spanish court: "Being young, and a widow, she comes, as Ovid says of women going to the play, to see and to be seen, that perhaps the emperor may like her, and also to woo the Queen-Dowager of Portugal for her brother. . . . Then, as they are both young widows, she shall find good commodity in cackling with her to advance her brother's matter, and if she finds her inclined thereto, they will help each other."

Happily, Margaret was unaware of the Spanish views upon her embassy, for, even without the knowledge, her nerves could only have been tense with the crucial uncertainties of her expedition, and the gravity of the issues hanging practically upon her personal fascination and diplomacy. If this man could be made to feel attraction, her mission was half secured already. All France looked upon success as a certain prospect. She was held to be so clever, so fascinating, so superior and intelligent, that beyond doubt, it was thought, she would achieve in a few interviews what a man would require a month to bring to a conclusion. She had hardly reached Spain before she received premature congratulations — "*A vous, madame, l'honneur et la merite.*"

But Margaret was to fail—bitterly, completely, and inevitably. Charles had pointedly ignored the question of marriage in his answer to Louise de Savoie's letter. After seeing Margaret, it had still no attraction for him. That in itself was, in some measure, failure, and a thrust at pride as well. As a matter of fact, Charles found her, not only no longer very young or very pretty, but far too clever. "She is more of a prodigy than a woman," remarked the man, who had every kind of astuteness himself, and needed contrast for fascination.

The negotiations took place in Toledo, but from the beginning Margaret had no chance of producing the smallest change of outlook. Charles refused to have any witness to their interviews; whatever he said could therefore be denied, if necessary. Margaret wrote to Francis from Toledo: "I went yesterday to visit the emperor. I found him very guarded and cold in his demeanour. He took me apart into his room with one lady to await me"—(this was outside)—"but when there, his discourse was not worth so great a ceremony, for he put me off to confer with his council, and will give me an answer to-day."

The poor ambassadress soon grew baffled and

exasperated. She had hoped great things from gaining over the Queen of Portugal. But Eleanor was cleverly sent upon an unwilling pilgrimage, concerning which Margaret wrote to Francis : " It is true that she sets out on her journey to-morrow. Before her departure I shall take leave of her. I believe she acts thus out of obedience more than in compliance with her own will, for they hold her in great subjection."

A later letter showed that Margaret had now grown utterly disheartened. And before the end of her embassy, to express how deeply inimical and unworthy she considered the emperor's conduct to be, she left the palace placed by him at her disposal, and moved into a convent, so as to destroy all obligations of hospitality.

The negotiations, as one knows, came to nothing. Charles was resolute not to abate one demand for the woman who had all the facile sweetnesses of her brother, all the glib and cunning adroitnesses he knew so well in his intercourse with the other. The family resemblance between them was over-strong ; Charles could not avoid suspecting the sister of the same deep, inherent duplicity as the brother.

Margaret had failed, and all her life this sharp and public failure must have remained a hidden

sore in memory. She had also, after her defeat, ungracefully to rush back into safety. The period of her safe conduct had almost expired, and information had been received that Charles intended to detain her as prisoner if she exceeded it.

The consequent release of Francis and the terms of the agreement are matters of history. Margaret had no hand in them, and the next momentous incident in which she figured was her own re-marriage with the King of Navarre.

This marriage is among Margaret's foolishnesses. Henri D'Albret, who had been another of the prisoners taken at Pavia, was eleven years her junior and exceptionally good-looking. Charles V. remarked of him later that, save for Francis, he was the one *man* he had seen in France. Margaret should have known that to keep the affections of a handsome husband, over whom she possessed the disadvantage of eleven years' seniority, was anticipating the impossible. But at the time of their first meeting they had intellectually many interests in common, and Margaret, it seems, fell in love with his fascinations. The marriage was not to prove happier than the previous one; but in the beginning everything promised the creature of *joyeuse vie* a more congenial existence than she had known for

many years. Henri de Navarre was an able and conscientious administrator; Bordeaux says of him, "Had he not been so given to women as he was, he would have been irreproachable. He loved his people like his children."

At Navarre, Margaret made her court the home of three kinds of people—the intellectual, the gay, and the persecuted; for while Francis had been a prisoner in Spain, Louise had established the Inquisition in France. The scholar Berguin was the first notable personality to be martyred by it; but the precedent once established, there followed a never-ending list, drawn from every class of society. Margaret had tried to save Berguin, and, indeed, was all her life, from that date onwards, trying to save some one from the furnaces of the Inquisition. Florimond de Rémond, in his "Historie du Progres de l'heresie," says—and he was not upon her side, and refers to her elsewhere as a good but too easy-going princess—"She had a marvellous dexterity in saving and sheltering those in peril for religion's sake." As a further corroboration, there is Sainte Marthe's pretty reference, "She made herself a harbour and refuge for the despairing. . . . Seeing them surrounding this good lady, you would have said it was a hen who

carefully calls and assembles its little chickens to cover them with her wings."

Etienne Dolet, another remarkable scholar, who was at one time the friend of Rabelais, she strove to the last to rescue. She was twice successful, but Dolet was more difficult to save than most people, being by nature inherently quarrelsome. Among the charges made by the Sorbonne against him was the remark he had made, that he preferred the sermon to the mass, while in his writings he had seemed to doubt the immortality of the soul. The first charge alone was considered sufficient reason for burning him. Orriz, the Inquisitor, whom later Renée was to have bitter dealings with in Ferrara, headed the Paris Inquisition; and Orriz, of the feline persuasive manners, is said to have found no occupation so congenial as that of hunting, trying, and making ashes of heretical people. Dolet himself had already said of him, "I never knew any one more ignorant, more cunning, or more lustful after the death of a Christian." Lanothe Laizon adds an interesting touch to this impression. He writes: "Orriz was grim only to those who did not finance his purse. He became soft and lenient to those who paid him, . . . and for a round sum one could get from him excellent certificates of

Catholicity." This leniency, however, could not be relied upon; Orriz had a trick of letting prisoners go and then rearresting them upon another accusation.

Dolet was very brilliant and very eloquent. His epigrams were held to be so good that one of his friends begged him to make one on him, so that his name might go down to posterity. Margaret had invited Dolet to shelter in the safety of Bourges, but he was too reckless to be permanently rescued. He escaped once from prison, and was re-caught, it is said, because he could not keep himself from coming back to see his little son. He had written in his Commentaries, "I now come to the subject of Death, the extreme boundary of life, terrible to those about to die." It is a wonderful phrase, solemn with a simply worded, haunting veracity.

Margaret herself had, it is said, become touched with more than pure compassion for the new doctrines. And martyrs were being made not only for Lutheranism; a rival reformer—no less abusive—had arisen in Calvin, whom Margaret was supposed among others to have sheltered at Navarre. She certainly corresponded with him, and Calvin upon one occasion censured her for harbouring godless people among her flock. It is, however,

wonderful and disturbing to realize how these Protestants, through a sustaining passion for right conduct, bore the unbearable. There are stories of death after death which cannot be read without anguish. These martyrs of the Sorbonne rendered even hideous facts heartbreaking and sweet. In 1557, for instance, Calvin wrote to comfort some doomed disciples in the Inquisition prisons at Paris. Among them was a certain Lady Phillipine de Luny. When the day for her burning came, "the executioners beheld her approach with a smile of happiness on her face, and dressed in white as for a festival." How did they do it? Phillipine de Luny was not yet twenty-four years of age.

At another bonfire Louis de Marsac was offended because they did not, in leading him to the stake, put a halter round his neck as they had done to the rest of the party; the indignity had been spared him on account of his noble birth. He asked why he was refused the collar of that "excellent order" of martyrs. Another victim, Peter Berger, shortly before, had exclaimed, like Stephen when the flames reached him, "I see the heavens opened."

These burnings destroyed a good deal of Margaret's original joyousness of temperament.

But nothing lasts; an event that whitens a person's very lips with horror is over by the morrow; the week after, thousands of trivial incidents have swept between. Domestic existence is full of sanity and healing. Margaret had an engrossing daily life apart from her pitiful struggle to save people who exulted in new conceptions of the soul and immortality. She was often at Paris, and she was also busy at this time with her babies.

Before the birth of her first, the little Jeanne D'Albret of the brave heart and strenuous life, Margaret wrote the following letter to Francis: "I hope, nevertheless, that God will permit me to see you before my hour arrives; but if this happiness is not to be mine, I will cause your letter to be read to me, instead of the life of Sainte Marguerite" (the patron saint of pregnant women), "as having been written by your own hand it will not fail to inspire me with courage. I cannot, however, believe that my child will presume to be born without your command; to the last, therefore, I shall eagerly expect your much-desired arrival." The little lady, who was always to prove of an independent spirit, did apparently presume to be born without Francis's command.

The relation between Margaret and her

daughter is the least satisfactory part of Margaret's life. She was upon one occasion actually cruel to the child—a thing incomprehensible from a heart so motherly and kind. Francis was the reason but not the excuse for Margaret's behaviour. There were rumours that she and her husband were negotiating to marry the child to a prince of Spain. Navarre—held in fief from Spain—would then be free once more, which Francis, for personal political reasons, did not desire. When Jeanne was two years old, therefore, he took her from her mother and placed her in the gloomy castle of Plessis Les Tours, where Louis XI. had shut himself up behind bolts and bars during the last years of his life. It was like educating a child in prison. In all her writings Margaret has not left one word of protest, and yet at two years old a child to its mother is a miracle and an intoxication.

Later, when Francis promised the child in marriage to the Duke of Cleves, Margaret was really cruel. The marriage could only have been bitter both to her and to Henri of Navarre. But Francis desired it, and that was sufficient for Margaret. The duke was a heavy, unattractive person; and Othagaray says that Francis originally "named the lady to the Duke of Cleves

without the consent of father and mother." When he named him to the lady herself—not quite twelve years old—a supreme surprise occurred for her elders. The child became passionate with disgust. She would not marry him—a hideous foreign creature, whose language she did not even understand. There were many scenes with the disobedient child at Plessis. Her father, who would have helped her if he could, had not the power to do so, and Margaret remained like ice to the appeals of her sickened daughter.

Now, Margaret had once written to Montmorency in reference to some woman Francis wished her to persuade into a marriage for her daughter which the lady disliked: "You know that my disposition and hers are so different that we are not fairly matched; for to vanquish the will of a woman whom no one has yet been able to persuade through the medium of one who is persuaded by everybody, seems to me to promise little except that she will conduct herself in her usual manner towards me." This "who is persuaded by everybody" had its heart-sprung quality, but in the matter of Jeanne's marriage it showed a colder and more weak-willed element. She wrote to Francis an almost frantic letter, expressing her "tribulation" at her daughter's

"senseless" appeal that she might not be married to the Duke of Cleves. Then, as Jeanne continued rebellious, Margaret wrote to her governess that she must be beaten into obedience. True, a child of twelve years old could not very well be in a position to select a suitable husband, and whipping was a recognized and much-used discipline at that period. But Margaret of Navarre should have known better: she had been brought up in a different school of feeling.

Presently Francis—afraid that Henri might save his daughter—gave orders that the betrothal and marriage should take place immediately. It was under these circumstances that the child wrote her well-known protest, signing it with her own brave, childish hand, and having it witnessed by three members of her household. This is what she said: "I, Jeanne de Navarre, persisting in the protestations I have already made, do hereby again affirm and protest, by those present, that the marriage which it is desired to contract between the Duke of Cleves and myself is against my will; that I have never consented to it nor will consent, and that all I may say and do hereafter by which it may be attempted to prove that I have given my consent, will be forcibly extorted against my wish and desire from my dread of the

king, of the king my father, and the queen my mother, who has threatened me, and has had me whipt by my governess, the Baillive of Caen. By command of the queen, my mother, my said governess has also several times declared that if I did not give my consent, I should be so severely punished as to occasion my death, and that by refusing I might be the cause of the total ruin and destruction of my father, my mother, and of their house."

Jeanne was married, notwithstanding, but happily the sequel showed an unusual quality of mercy. She never really became the wife of the Duke of Cleves after all. After the marriage ceremony had taken place, she was left for two years with her mother, pending the time when she should be old enough to join her husband. At the end of the two years the Duke of Cleves surrendered to the emperor, and abandoned all claims to his bride, the marriage, therefore, being at once declared non-existent.

Jeanne did not, in fact, marry until the next reign; but there is one story of her after life so charming that it is a pity not to tell it here. Her father promised her a golden box he wore on a long chain round his neck, if she would sing an old Bearn-folk song while in the pains of

child-birth. She agreed, and kept her promise, singing with brave persistence at a time when most women wish that they were dead.

Margaret's own marriage had proved unhappy some time before her daughter's futile first wedding. She had written long ago, in one of her letters to Montmorency, concerning her husband: "As you are with him, I fear not that everything will go well, excepting that I am afraid you cannot prevent him from paying assiduous court to the Spanish ladies." It comes as a digression; but there is, about the same period, an interesting appeal from Margaret to Montmorency, concerning her brother: "It strikes me it would be advisable for you to praise the king in your letters for the great attention he pays to affairs." The suggestion holds the essence of the relationship of a woman to the man she loves. No woman but manages and cajoles the creature cared for, like a mother trying to coax a child into good behaviour.

Margaret and her husband disagreed upon religious questions as well as about the subject of other ladies. Jeanne, who lived with them for the two years she was waiting to join the Duke of Cleves, wrote, many years after her mother's death, that her father grew very angry and beat

her if she showed any interest in the new doctrines, and that she remembered on one occasion, when a Protestant teacher had been with her mother, his coming furiously to drive him out. Margaret having been warned, had already got rid of the man; but Henri, too angry instantly to abstain from violence, went up and boxed Margaret's ears, saying passionately, "You want to know too much, madam." His conduct became so undesirable that Brantome says, "Henri D'Albret treated the queen, his wife, very badly, and would have treated her worse, had it not been for her brother Francis, who rated him soundly, and ended by threatening him because he had been disrespectful to his sister, in spite of her high rank."

Margaret, happily, was many-sided; one unhappiness did not render her obdurate against the entry of the rest. Probably she went through an interval of supreme heart-sickness. But a middle-aged woman has under every circumstance a painful phase to go through. There is one period in every woman's life hard to face and hard to bear — the period of relinquishments. The sweets of youth are over; for the future there is only the swift, chill journey into old age to front with calm and dignity. Margaret's

face in middle age suggests that she made her relinquishments with completeness and courage.

But—though the statement is a repetition—no person's life can be laid unremittingly upon the rack. Margaret, surrounded by people—her ladies, poets, scholars, painters, and others—was kept pleasantly preoccupied. The second Clouet painted her; Leonard Limousin, the great enamellist, wrought her exquisite enamels. Like most royalties of her day, she took great interest in her garden, and in the love affairs of her ladies she was unfailingly sympathetic and kind. A contemporary wrote of her as "the precious carnation in the flower garden of the palace. Her fragrance had drawn to Bearn, as thyme draws the honey-bee, the noblest minds in Europe."

It is true that many of the "noblest minds of Europe" were drawn to Margaret. Even Rabelais, the last man to take pleasure in praising women without good reason, dedicated the third book of his "Pantagruel" to her. Rabelais, though he was the epitome of the Renaissance spirit in France, is too capacious to mention fragmentarily in the life of another person. And yet few men of the period convey a sweeter

impression. He was colossal in everything; in compassion as well as laughter.

After the publication of his "Gargantua" and "Pantagruel," Rabelais narrowly escaped the Sorbonne. But he was wise, and had no taste for being roasted. In the life of Pantagruel, referring to Toulouse, then the great centre of persecution, he said, ostensibly of Pantagruel, in reality of himself, "But he remained little time there, when he perceived that they made no bones about burning their regents alive like red herrings, saying, 'The Lord forbid that I should die in this manner, for I am dry enough by nature, without being heated any further.'"

It is purposeless here to refer to Rabelais's coarseness. At the present time no woman could read him. But, then, no woman for pleasure would read Margaret's "Heptameron," and Margaret, for all the grossness of a large number of her stories, had the capacity for a very delicate and artificial refinement.

She and Rabelais never came to a sufficient knowledge of each other for friendship; but there is a legend of Rabelais's death which touches her outlook upon spiritual things very closely. A messenger had been despatched by Rabelais's friend, Cardinal du Bellay, to inquire how he felt.

Rabelais lay dying when the messenger arrived, but he sent back the following answer: "I go to find the great Perhaps." A little later, still conscious of the pettiness of all human circumstances, he rallied sufficiently to make a last good phrase. "Pull the blind," he is said to have whispered; "the farce is played out."

This, "I go to find the great Perhaps," was a sentence Margaret might have echoed had she known of it. There is an incident in her own life curiously in tune with the statement.

It must have occurred when she was, at any rate, middle aged, and the thought of death had become hauntingly vivid. One of her ladies-in-waiting lay dying. As the girl gradually sank into unconsciousness, the duchess insisted upon sitting by her bed. The attendants begged her to go away, but she refused to move, and sat staring silently at the dying figure. There seemed something unnatural in the absorption of her eyes, and her women were puzzled. When the girl was at last dead, Margaret turned away; visibly she betrayed disappointment. One of her ladies then asked her why she had leant forward and watched with such unmoving intensity the lips of the dying girl. Her answer is pathetic behind its callousness. She had been told, she

said, that the soul leaves the body at the actual moment of death. She had looked and listened to catch the faintest sound of its emergence through the lips of the dying body, but she had seen and heard nothing. The watching had been, to a great extent, cold-blooded, but the result was a tragic discouragement of thought. There seemed nothing to strengthen belief with at all.

Nevertheless, if Margaret felt occasionally like a rat caught in a trap, since being alive one must inevitably and shortly die, she continued to the end to enjoy the present as far as possible. She shivered with spiritual dubieties; but at the same time she wrote the "Heptameron," a book above everything earthy, caustic, and shrewd. It is said to have been written for Francis I. during his last illness. He had been inordinately amused by Boccaccio, and Margaret tried to give him stories in the same vein.

They are and they are not. The outline and the idea are similar; but Margaret was not a second Boccaccio. She wrote easily and naturally—she would have written a novel every year had she lived at the present time; but where Boccaccio was witty and light, Margaret was relentless and crude. Her brutality gives as

great a shock as her indelicacy. It seems incredible, for instance, that she should have written the following termination to one of her stories. In the tale a priest was discovered to have made his sister his mistress. The woman was about to have a baby. The judges waited until the child was born; then brother and sister were burnt together. The very simplicity with which the statement is made adds to its horror. Margaret wrote: "They waited till his sister was brought to bed. Then when she had made a beautiful son, the sister and brother were burnt together." The sentence, "when she had made a beautiful son," renders the incident alive and unbearable.

It is difficult to say much of Margaret's "Heptameron." The stories are a curious mixture of appalling grossness, and the most soft and grieving mysticism. What one chiefly gathers from them in connection with her temperament is that, side by side with a noteworthy charm and sympathy, she possessed a slender strain of ruthlessness. Margaret's nose was too long. To have a nose so much in excess, so thin and pointed, is always dangerous. Some want of balance must accompany its disproportion, some streak of cruelty its ungenerous narrowness. As

a matter of fact, notwithstanding her nose, Margaret was a miracle of lovely kindlinesses, but it conquered in the matter of her daughter—she was a cold, unprofitable mother. Again, in the "Heptameron," it is the temperament belonging to the long unbalanced feature whose detestation of the priests found outlet in such relentless vengeances. To some extent Margaret's little chin saved her. Counterpoised, as it were, between two excesses—the cold, deceitful nose, and the yielding, enthusiastic chin—she contrived to retain balance between either, and to be, on the whole, an intricacy of characteristics, none of which surged into overwhelming predominance. The ascendant characteristics were all good—her sheltering instincts and her half-fearsome mystical aspirations. She had, long before the Maeterlinck utterance of it, the sense of a world in which everything was in reality spiritual and portentous. In one of the stories of the "Heptameron" she makes a lady—in reality herself, for the tale is said to be true—bring a fickle lover to the grave of his forgotten love, to see if no subtle communication issues from the dead body beneath them. When he feels nothing, her disappointment is almost painful, for no trait in Margaret renders her so endearing as this disquieted

craving to be assured that existence was something more profound and worthy than a brief term of suffering consciousness.

During the latter years of her existence Margaret suffered from ill health. In 1542 Mario Cavelli wrote of her: "The Queen of Navarre looks very delicate, so delicate, I fear she has not long to live. Yet she is so sober and moderate that, after all, she may last. She is, I think, the wisest, not only of the women, but of the men of France."

She must have been pleasant company. So many men of sound insight could not have valued her society unless she had possessed unusual sense and heartiness. Her conversation is repeatedly mentioned as brilliant, eloquent, full of thought and sympathy.

Francis I. died in March, 1547. Margaret had said that when he died she did not want to go on living, but she had more brains and more vitality than she knew of. Everything interested her, even when she was not happy. To the last she did what she could to help the Reformers—her husband made it impossible for her to do much. Under the stimulus of Henri and Diane the Sorbonne had increased in laboriousness. Upon the subject of its added licence there is

one humorous story, told by Duchatel, the witty secretary of Francis I., who used to say of him that he was the only man whose knowledge he had not exhausted after two years' intimacy.

Duchatel preached the funeral sermon upon Francis, and said, with complimentary intention, that the soul of the king had gone straight to heaven. The doctors of the Sorbonne—swollen with courage under the known bigotry of the new king and the king's mistress—complained at once of the horrible utterance. Pious as the late king had been, his soul could not have escaped purgatory. They sent deputies to Henri II. charging Duchatel with heresy; there existed an old grudge against him. The deputies were received, and given a conciliatory dinner by the king's *maître d'hôtel*, Mendoza, and advised not to proceed further with the charge. "I knew the character of the late king intimately," said Mendoza, wittily. "He never could endure to be in one place long. If he did go to purgatory, he would only stay there sufficient time to drink a stirrup cup and move on."

It was Margaret's time to "move on." She went, in the autumn of 1549, to drink some mineral waters, but they did her no good. She

was consumptive, and in a condition past being cured. During her last illness she is reported to have said, concerning her protection of heretics, "All I have done, I have done from compassion." She could have given no better reason.

Her death was preceded by less suffering than most people's; she simply sank into unconsciousness. At the last she struggled back for a second from stupor, and, grasping a cross that lay upon the bed, muttered, "Jesus, Jesus, Jesus," and fell back dead.

RENÉE, DUCHESS OF FERRARA

1510—1575

RENÉE, daughter of Anne of Brittany, was, like her mother, destitute of any sympathy with the intellectuality of the period in which she lived. But the Renaissance brought about the reaction of the Reformation, and Renée's life is interesting as the story of the domestic difficulties confronted by an individual sympathetic to the new doctrines during their first calamitous strivings in Italy. The danger to a person of the same views in France has been seen in the life of Margaret D'Angoulême.

Renée's Italian career is interesting, besides, as the intimate history of a stubborn, unimaginative, and unadaptable temperament in a married life betraying from the commencement extreme incompatibility of disposition. The circumstance may occur to any one, and each woman deals with it according to her nature. Exactly how she does so, is one of the clearest tests of her

valour and her intelligence. A true woman of the Renaissance—Vittoria Colonna and Isabella of Mantua, for instance, carried a dignified marital complaisance to heroic extremities—would have preserved surface amenities, however distasteful the husband. But Renée, brought up by people to whom she was simply a dull and undesirable orphan, never learnt that small accommodations of behaviour are among the primary and desirable virtues. Her father had been rich in them, but the self-willed spirit of her mother, Anne, was more noticeable in the character of her second daughter than the paternal trait. To have lived with Renée would undoubtedly have rendered affection difficult. But to know her without the irritation of daily intercourse, as a perplexed, mistaken, blundering, wistful, and unloved woman, is to be drawn into a reluctant sympathy. She was, to begin with, ugly, and there is nothing in its consequences more pathetic than a woman's ugliness. She was also, almost from her babyhood, without one single person who truly loved her. From the outset her character had been chilled and bleakened.

Born on October 25, 1510, though she came disappointingly enough to the woman craving for a son, Renée was made welcome with a careful

pomp that bordered almost upon tenderness. Her baptism became the pretext for a magnificent pageant, and in an account of the expenses incurred for her childish household, she is called the king's "very dear and much loved daughter, Renée."

Two years after Renée's birth Anne died. At five years old Renée was an orphan, and with her sister Claude, the patient, piteous, and most mishandled wife of Francis I., passed into the care of Louise de Savoie. They were the children of Louise's most persistent enemy; she could not, therefore, have done otherwise than dislike them. Brantome says that she was extremely harsh to both, and it is certain that Renée, plain, delicate, and deformed, never became to anybody a person of sufficient importance to be coaxed into prettiness of ways and feelings. The gentle Claude must have loved her smaller sister while she lived, but Claude died of consumption almost immediately after Francis I. started for Italy, when Renée was only fourteen years of age, and from that time until her marriage the girl knew no one prepared to do more than a cold and pleasureless duty towards her.

In justice to Louise it must be admitted that

every effort was made to procure Renée a suitable husband. They promised her at one time to the Archduke Charles, but already her want of average good looks rendered some apologies necessary. The life of any girl towards whom such an attitude has to be assumed must possess an undue measure of painfulness. Before presenting the bride to the Archduke it was considered imperative to tell him that "the charm of her conversation greatly atoned for her want of beauty." The proposal came to nothing, and after several other unavailing negotiations Francis settled upon a marriage with Ercole of Ferrara, the son of Duke Alphonso and Lucrezia.

It was not a good match for a girl in whose veins ran the blood of a king of France. Mezeray said of it, "The king arranged a very poor match for this princess, and sent her into a far country, lest she should ask him one day for a share in Brittany and in the patrimony of Louis."

Mezeray spoke from a knowledge of Francis's character, but the motives in this one instance were probably less cunning than he thought them. Renée was not an easy young girl to marry; her own father had said years ago that it would be difficult to find a husband for her. Nevertheless, at this time she was probably as

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RENÉE OF FERRARA, AGED FIFTEEN

CORNEILLE DE LYON

nearly nice-looking as at any time of her existence. She had just turned eighteen, and, in spite of a slight deformity, possessed a certain dignity of carriage, inherited from her mother. She had also the whitest of skins, and beautiful fair hair that reached to the ground. It was said that she had at this time more to thank nature for than to complain of, and the early portraits of her are at least not actually ugly. The principal thing that strikes one in them is a certain dulness of expression, as if heaviness of spirit had crushed out vivacity. Her face suggests strongly the uncared-for upbringing of her childhood—the blue eyes are apathetic and unamused, the mouth wistfully inanimate. It is just possible that Ercole might have kissed her into a childlike lightness of thought; but Ercole did not find her kissable, and she was in any case born with the confined and congealing seriousness of character that came to her as an intensified quality from her unimaginative and easily scandalized mother.

Ercole represented the antithesis of his future wife. His appearance was fascinating, his manners were good; all the culture of the Renaissance permeated his blood. Small wonder, therefore, that Renée's looks came as a bitter shock to him. He wrote to his father after the first interview,

and stated plainly, "*Madama Renea non e bella.*" The Ferrarese ambassador also wrote that his master would have preferred the lady to possess a better figure. But Ercole had come to France chiefly to make a good political marriage, and his objections to poor Renée personally were greatly outweighed by her parentage and her dowry.

Oddly enough, the girl herself does not appear to have liked the handsome Italian any better than he liked her. At the formal engagement she behaved with extreme shyness and a visible distress of manner. Nobody cared, however, what she thought in the matter, and a month later the wedding was celebrated. For that one day Louise does certainly appear to have tried to make the most of her. The girl's magnificent hair hung, soft and moving in itself, unbound about her shoulders, and her gown of scarlet and ermine literally gleamed with the jewels heaped upon it. Renée's skin was undeniably good—Bonnet refers to the whiteness of her breast and throat—and above the heavy splendour of her wedding garments her little subdued and plaintive face could only have worn a look of quaint, appealing incongruity.

The subsequent festivities continued until both bride and bridegroom became rather comically

ill—through excess of food and want of sleep. Renée, who all her life suffered from the tragedy of headaches, had the *migraine*, and they began to think the time had come to start for Italy. Francis I. himself accompanied them to the gates of Paris. Here he solemnly confided his sister-in-law into the care of her husband, who was ordered always to treat her as a daughter of the royal house of France. Ercole, feeling that he had no reason to be diffident as regards his relations to the other sex, answered that he would have no difficulty in both pleasing and managing the lady. Subsequent events rendered the reply a little humorous. The small, meek wife, who heard the remark probably without even the desire to smile, proved in after years to the last degree intractable. Certainly Ercole never succeeded in managing her.

Ferrara, at the time of Renée's marriage, had been devastated by the plague. Before she made her state entry, an order was issued commanding the people to reopen their shops, put on their best clothes, and, whatever their private emotions, show a cheerful countenance upon the arrival of their future duchess. Triumphal arches were erected, windows hung with silk, and through an almost painful effort Renée was received with the

usual good-natured welcome from the people. Isabella of Mantua, the new bride's aunt-in-law, always in great request for social occasions, had come to assist in receiving her, and several days were filled with public pageants, banquets, and plays.

But below the surface neither the new arrival nor those that received her were in a rejoicing mood. The last duchess to be welcomed to Ferrara had been the attractive, sweet-faced Lucrezia Borgia, dubious, it is true, in morals, but pleasant as a flower to look upon. This "ugly and hunch-backed" French girl could not avoid coming as a disagreeable shock, both to the crowd and to her new connections. It is the bitter fate of an ugly woman that she must always destroy antipathetic first impressions before she can hope to sow favourable ones. And Renée, on her side, was as little pleased as those who received her. It is generally supposed, in fact, that her instant and intense dislike to Ferrara had a good deal to do with her initial mistakes in Italy.

Certainly Ferrara was not an attractive city. Set in the middle of an enormous plain, a dreary monotony encompassed it, while the town itself, having pre-eminently to consider the necessities

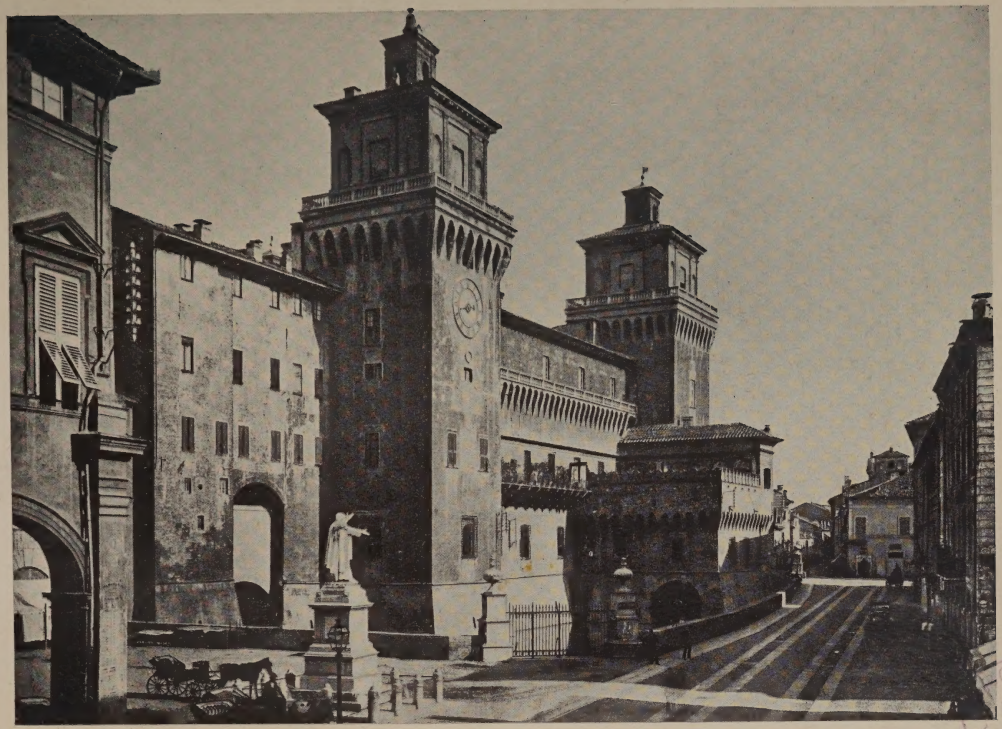
of defence, was grim, sinister, and aggressive looking. Even the Castello appeared nothing more than a powerful and gloomy fortress. Subject to unhealthy mists from the Po, the climate, moreover, underwent continual extremes of temperature, and one of Renée's ladies-in-waiting describes it bitterly as a perfect hotbed of fleas. Frogs croaked all night and crows cawed all day. The inside of the castle, besides, was pitiably dilapidated. The house of Ferrara, constantly in want of money, had a habit of leaving matters needing repairs until repairs were no longer needed.

To Renée the place exhaled the chill of exile. In addition, as all the amusements arranged for her reception were in Italian, they only bored her beyond expression. In fact, one of the gravest faults of the girl's Italian career lay in her reluctance to acquire Italian phrases. She arrived in Ferrara ignorant of even a rudimentary knowledge of her husband's language, and taking an immediate dislike to the place and to the people, refused to make any real effort to learn the speech of those about her. This slow, and at all times inefficient, acquirement of Italian remained steadily against her, keeping her, apart from any other consideration, a very

isolated person in her own establishment—an outsider where she should have been the central figure.

The only attempt she made in the right direction was to order, soon after her arrival, a number of dresses cut after the Italian fashions. But even this, due probably to an evanescent dazzlement at the charming appearance of the Italian women, she rendered an actual affront in the sequence. For shortly afterwards, either in bitterness of soul at her own poor appearance in them, or because she deliberately wished to behave with provocation, they were discarded for her former French style of dressing, which she then bluntly stated to be "more holy and more decent." From the beginning Renée persistently refused to identify herself with her husband's interests. She clung with stupid pathos to the associations of her by no means happy childhood, and was homesick all the years of her Italian sojourn for the ways of her own people.

All through, her conduct was hopelessly mistaken. In the give and take of marriage it is part of a woman's lovely chances always to give a little more than is yielded back to her. At the same time, it is questionable whether, owing to her ugliness and want of charm, Renée, whatever



Alinari

THE CASTELLO AT FERRARA

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she had done, could have become popular. There ought, in truth, almost to exist a different code for the really ugly woman. The fact is so profoundly and entirely tragic. Tenderness is the heart of life to women, and any woman so misused by nature as to be unable to rouse this becomes, through subtle piteousness, beyond ordinary judgment. She lives in a world both unjust and inimical, practically with her back to the wall. Sweet follies have never harmonized her to the unreason of humanity; failure lies always upon her soul. For inherited, deep-rooted, ineradicable, is in most women the unformulated knowledge that to attract men is the normal fate of their sex; the creature who cannot do this once at least in life, carries a hidden sense not only of loneliness, and of something vital ungranted by destiny, but of secret shame and humiliation.

Renée had never glowed bewildered under absurdities of praise. If only as an isolated experience, this mad blitheness is curiously good for character. Afterwards a woman knows—is sympathetically inside the circle of things—seeing the dramas of others, not like a child staring starved at a food shop, but as one who has already had her fill of cakes with the best of them.

All her life Renée remained the hungry child who sees others overfed on the sweets denied to her. Small wonder, in consequence, that she hated the ways of frivolity, and was slow in advances of friendship. No soft remembrances freighted her thoughts with gentleness, and when she came to Italy she was already destitute of the exaltation that, out of the abundance of its own contentment, craves to create nothing but contentment about it. For this immediate hostility Ercole must have been in a measure responsible. A woman happy in her married life is incapable of passionately revolting against the accessories that encompass it. Renée never liked her husband, and the fact that she did not may have been due to his half-hearted efforts as lover. A girl of eighteen, ugly, neglected, and unattractive, cannot be a difficult person for a handsome man to ensnare. Renée, besides, was a very ordinary woman—she had inherent need to cling to some one. It would certainly have bored Ercole had he been the creature she clung to, but the boredom would at least have saved him years of dangerous domestic friction, and a life of disagreements in which he did not always get the best of it.

As it was, mutual dissatisfaction came almost

immediately. Very soon after their arrival in Ferrara they had begun to quarrel. Among the French women Renée had brought with her from France was her old governess, Madame de Soubise, whose leanings were strongly Protestant. She had instilled the same sympathies into her pupil, and a very short time after her arrival in Ferrara the new duchess was surrounded by a large number of persons professing the new religion. A good deal of her personal income also went in assisting French fugitives who happened to pass through the city. Both proceedings were objected to by Ercole. The presence of Protestants in his household constituted an actual danger to his own and his father's position. The tenure of the Dukedom of Ferrara depended upon the maintenance of friendly relations with Rome and Germany. Renée's monetary kindness to French fugitives he complained about as "inordinate and ill-considered expenses," and since her allowance from France was very irregularly paid, this grievance had a certain rational basis. Nobody attached to the duchess's personal service was Italian, a final discourtesy in her arrangements that added to the growing exasperation of her new relations.

As regards the Protestantism of Renée's household, no direct mention was made of it in Ercole's objections. With the indirect methods of his family, he merely stated that the duchess had surrounded herself with a number of people unfit for the functions attributed to them. That certainly was true. A certain number of Renée's so-called servants did absolutely nothing for their pay, save keep some lingering memories of her French home vivid in her thoughts. Consequently, in the first definite publication of friction between the newly married couple, most of the reasonable complaints were Ercole's. They show, however, the rapidity with which these two had got upon each other's nerves. Neither, at any stage of their intercourse, made the least attempt to adopt a conciliatory attitude.

Renée's generosity, nevertheless, was the redemption of her character. For there is more than one kind of generosity. There is the careless output of a person chiefly feckless, and not desirous of uttering disagreeable refusals, and the deliberate, anxious, continuous assistance of a nature really capable of fretting for the distresses of other people. Renée's generosity was essentially of this sort. The most prominent facts in the book of her daily expenses are sums

given in some form of charity. She appears, indeed, to have been unable to refuse any cry for assistance, and all her life gave with equal pleasure either to Roman Catholics or to Protestants. Anne had been generous, but in the showy and semi-profitable manner so easy for great people. Renée's generosity was entirely lovely and intuitive.

Concerning her attitude in the matter of her household arrangements, it is more difficult to guess what lay in her peevish spirit. Madame de Soubise had obviously brought her up—*sub rosa* —to a tentative liking for the new religion. But by character she belonged to the conservatives; she was supremely among those who consider that what has been good enough for their parents is good enough for them also. And Louise and Francis—of whom she stood in awe—were not likely to receive pleasantly the news that her religious soundness had become doubtful. At the beginning there are no statements suggesting that she was not fairly comfortable in the tenets she conformed to. It is possible, in fact, that the people of her entourage were originally chosen without intention of offence, from sheer obtuseness to perceive unsuitability. Then when it became evident that they caused

annoyance to Ercole, it may have become a sulky pleasure to retain them.

Ercole and Renée were two personalities that ought never to have come together. Both were capable of pleasant relations with other people, but there existed between them the instinctive and intractable antipathy which almost every nature experiences against some one person in the world. It is an emotion outside the reach of argument and very nearly beyond control. And no person can flower into the best possibilities of character when confronted with another fundamentally antagonistic. In the presence of a mind closed to perceive any kind of graciousness and merit, only the worst of nature will rise uppermost, flung out in a despairing perversity, distress, and irritation. For the actual sweetness of their souls no two people capable only of mutual repugnance should even make an effort to live together. Good—bewildered and assaulted —shrivels like a frozen plant under the chilling air of interminable disparagement.

Renée, less than a year after her marriage, already wrote unhappy letters to France. She spoke in one of them of being badly treated, but of not expecting that the real truth about the matter would ever reach the king and queen.

She mentioned that both her husband and her father-in-law nourished some grievance against her. Soon afterwards she fell ill, and for a short time Ercole's repugnance lulled into vague compassion. He sent two bulletins every day to Paris, and mentioned, almost with a hint of pleasure, when she was well enough to leave her bed for a little while daily. Even after her recovery no quarrels are mentioned for some time. The duchess had become *enceinte*, and the fact in itself, where an heir was so urgently needed, yielded sufficient pleasure to bring about temporary toleration.

Nevertheless, irritation between husband and wife must have smouldered unceasingly, and after the birth of a daughter in November, 1531, contention flared once more into an open blaze between them. Madame de Soubise represented the duke's new object of denunciation. A good deal of the turmoil of Renée's existence, in fact, arose from the influence of her former governess. She was old enough to be the girl's mother, and had lived sufficiently long in the world to know all the needful facts about life and character. Renée clung to her as the one friend familiar from childhood, and the older woman was in a position to have incalculably helped a rather

dense nature in the first crucial months of marriage.

For reasons difficult to understand, she did exactly the opposite. Ercole loathed her, and at any cost desired to have her back in Paris. Under ordinary circumstances this would have been a simple matter, but the position of Madame de Soubise was not so straightforward as it seemed. The Ferrarese authorities knew perfectly that she acted as secret agent to the French king. Owing to this fact, dismissal was unpolitic: Ferrara could not afford to offend France. It is to Ercole's credit that Madame de Soubise did not die a sudden death. The temptation to bring about an untimely ending must have been extraordinarily insistent.

To add to Ercole's domestic discomfort, Madame de Soubise's daughter was also among Renée's ladies-in-waiting. About this time, in fact, she married Monsieur Pons, another member of the household, and the man whose later friendship with Renée was to fleck the solemnity of her character with an incongruous suggestion of scandal.

During the time that husband and wife were bitterly fighting out the question of Madame de Soubise, Renée gave birth to another child—the

son so necessary to the welfare of the house. A second lull in hostilities followed. For the first time since she had come to Italy, Ercole's wife had done a truly desirable and conciliatory thing—she had given an heir to the dukedom. A feeling of pleasure lightened the constant tension of Ercole's establishment. Even the mother, conscious of being at last approved of, yielded to the warmth of a fugitive commendation and became almost frivolous. Her clothes, during the rejoicings that followed, were for once so sumptuous that all Ferrara talked of them.

Not long afterwards the old Duke Alphonso died, and Ercole became reigning Duke of Ferrara. Concerning his accession a curious incident is reported. After the religious ceremony of his inauguration, Renée met him at the entrance to the palace, where, it is said, in an outburst of mutual excitement and satisfaction, they fell into each other's arms. For a moment the interests of husband and wife were identical. The motive for this passing concord was in itself unworthy enough, but it is curiously interesting as an example of how intensely married people are fortified, by the very nature of marriage itself, into some sort of fellowship and good feeling. The immense number of mutual interests should

be in themselves sufficient to save any but the really vicious or abnormally unsuited from total disunion and antipathy.

But the impulse of an exultant moment rapidly chilled in the case of Ercole and his duchess. Madame de Soubise's secret labours prevented any but the briefest pacification. And Ercole had not long been duke when he came to the conclusion that, even at the price of a break with France, the daily infliction of her person was no longer supportable. With as much tact as the circumstances permitted, he wrote to Francis I. upon the subject, and in the end received authority for her departure. But even so, difficulties arose about the actual journey, and she still continued long enough in Ferrara to negotiate one last unpleasantness for Ercole.

He went away for a short time, and during his absence Madame de Soubise subtly arranged with the French royalties that Renée should at last go on a visit to her own country. Ercole returned to find the invitation waiting for him. He was placed by it in a very awkward position. An unhappy wife, quivering to tell a tale of misery and ill-treatment, was not a politic person to send to her own people when, should it suit them, they possessed the power to make affairs

very difficult for the husband. On the other hand, to refuse might be to rouse suspicion and displeasure.

Not entirely unperturbed, Ercole chose the second risk as the less dangerous of the two. In reply to the French invitation, he wrote that Renée had several small children to take care of, and that she was also still too feeble in health to undertake so long and dangerous a journey. The refusal came almost like a loss of all hope to Renée. Thought of it had been a sudden irradiating anticipation in the drear distastefulness of life. Nothing in a monotonous existence is more uplifting than an incident to make plans for, and now from the sudden quickening influence of a contemplated holiday she was flung back again upon the old confusing friction of her days in the grim Castello.

Every year Ercole's interests diverged more widely from her own. Renée loved France instinctively, as people love the home of their forefathers. When she first married Ferrara's interests lay in friendship with France. But Ercole's policy brought him later to the side of Pope and Emperor, when support from France ceased to be important. After Madame de Soubise, therefore, had at last been sent from

Italy, and all hope of Renée's going home had been withdrawn, the latter must have experienced almost a sense of desolation. The easement of heart entailed by merely telling the hoarded mischances of her married life would have warmed her spirit like a cordial.

She did not naturally love Ercole better for getting rid of the woman who had been motherly to her all her days, and for having thwarted the one intense longing which it was in his power to gratify. Their antagonism quieted not a whit through the departure of Renée's governess; Ercole had rid himself of one grievance only to find another grow more hardy.

Its first public demonstration took place during a Good Friday service in the church of Ferrara. As the cross was being raised for adoration, a little singer, Zanetto, belonging to the duchess's service, suddenly walked out of the building, making blasphemous comments in a voice of penetrating clarity. He was arrested that evening, and trouble and danger swept into Renée's household. She herself had for some time past secretly belonged to the Protestant party. Ercole's hope that his wife would fall into a weary acquiescence of conduct, when the influence of Madame de Soubise had been

withdrawn, ended in inevitable failure. Renée was disastrously obstinate, and in addition, the doctrines of Calvin had already become too deeply engrafted in her ever to be really uprooted. Religion was an urgent necessity to her.

She was an unloved woman, and consequently the other world had never slunk into vagueness through the engrossing sufficiencies of this one. The appeal made to her by the new religion is easy to understand. Her little soul was narrow, but it was at the same time eager, and temperamentally attuned to austere and dreary dogmas. Renée belonged to the class who prefer to take life sadly—a gloomy religion, hedged in by appalling terrors, met the needs of her character far more closely than the shifty and cheerful methods of Roman Catholicism could ever have done.

Before the Good Friday incident Calvin had secretly been to see her, had preached to her, and exhorted her. No man was better fitted to keep a hold over Renée; for Calvin was not merely the great preacher of a new religion, he was an impassioned and autocratic schoolmaster. When later he controlled the town of Geneva, it became impossible to indulge in even the mildest private weaknesses. Domestic conduct fell under the jurisdiction of a council, which

inflicted penalties for the least undesirable idiosyncrasy. It was at Geneva, for instance, that Calvin had a gambler set in the stocks for an hour, with his playing-cards hung round his neck; the inventor of a masquerade was forced to ask pardon for it on his knees in the cathedral; a man guilty of perjury they hoisted on a ladder and kept there for several hours, his right hand fastened to the top; while a man and woman, whose love lay under the stigma of impropriety, were paraded through the streets of the city for the abuse of virtuous horror. Calvin flung immense energy into the conversion of Renée. As an individual he thought little of her, but converts among the socially great were momentous for the growth of the cause. Renée, moreover, gave awed and pliant assent to the uncompromising preacher's teaching, until the arrest of her singer for blasphemy brought the sudden sharpness of danger into her household. This created panic. Not actually for herself—while Francis I. remained King of France she relied implicitly upon French protection—but for the people of her entourage. Zanetto, placed upon the rack, broke down at the third twist of the screw, and a list of names poured out of his lips. They were all persons

employed in the duchess's service. Several had already been arrested as accomplices, though concerning one of them, usually thought to be Calvin, there is considerable mystery. The arrests had been made by Ercole's orders, chiefly, it would appear, to exasperate his wife.

He owed her a fresh sword-thrust. This public religious scandal constituted a really serious danger for him. The Vatican had some time previously realized that the new heresy must be exterminated if it were not to become a growing danger to the power at Rome. Apart from this, Renée had been behaving with an inimical cunning difficult for any man to pass over good-humouredly. She had been writing secret letters to the Pope, supplicating him to have the prisoners delivered out of the power of Ercole into the authority of France.

In retaliation, Ercole had Cardillan, treasurer and controller of finances to Renée ever since her arrival in Ferrara, imprisoned with the others. Few things could have hurt her more, and the scenes that took place between the two over the Zanetto business must again have driven them into unforgettable personalities. In the matter of personal interviews Ercole no doubt had the best of it. Renée did not possess the gift of

facile utterance; her face alone shows a mind easily disconcerted. But her stolid silence would have held as much inner rancour as the other's violence. Beyond question, when roused, Ercole frightened her, but not sufficiently to abate forlorn contrariness. All he could achieve was to make her hate him a little more desperately than before, and to fling her with renewed tenacity upon the policy of aggravation. According to current rumour, Ercole beat her. The allegation has not been proved, but she was the type of woman liable to ill-treatment, and it is more than likely that he did. Certainly no respect was enforced towards her, for Renée, writing to Margaret of Navarre, complained that the Inquisitor whom she interviewed concerning the arrested heretics spoke to her with so much contempt and insolence, that the other would have been dumbfounded had she been present.

The situation of husband and wife at that period could not possibly have been worse. Ercole's enflamed resentment also found utterance in a letter. It was written to the Ferrarese envoy at the French court. Extreme caution in statements conveyed to paper formed part of Italian education, and the plain truthfulness of the duke's expressions could only have issued

from a spirit choking with a sense of injury. He wrote: "If it were not for the respect I owe to the king, I should certainly not have suffered such an insult, and should have shown madame the deep resentment I feel."

The bustling distress and excitement roused by the heretics nevertheless fizzled out. That a scandal of this sort should take serious proportions would have brought very evil notoriety upon the Ferrarese court. Cardillan was released and banished; the other prisoners conveniently permitted to escape. Ercole still gained his main object—the satisfaction of depriving Renée of another of her French attendants. Probably husband and wife hated each other a little more keenly than before, but to all appearances another storm had passed over. For the two still continued to share one bedroom. They must in consequence have enjoyed intervals of ordinary conversation and apparent friendliness. Moreover, they had children. In all the divergences of their interests, there remained some that could not be separated. After the sharp encounter brought about by the unwisdom of Zanetto, Renée gave birth to another infant. Household trivialities provided permanent groundwork for amiable bedroom discussions, and, however apa-

thetically, they must at least have gone through intervals of superficial good-humour.

Outwardly, at any rate, there occurred another lull in the fighting. The court removed into the country, and eased everything by an out-of-door existence. Marot, who had been sent by Margaret of Navarre to Renée for safety, made light, enticing verses upon the ladies he transiently delighted in. He also wrote a sonnet to Renée herself, that, besides containing one line of exquisite musicalness—"*O la douceur des douceurs feminines*"—shows how unconcealed the failure of her marriage had become. It suggests, in fact, that Ercole's behaviour was publicly abusive and unpardonable. He wrote—

> "Souvenant de tes graces divines
> Suis en douleur, princesse, en ton absence,
> Et si languis quand suis en ta presence
> Voyant ce Lys au milieu des épines.
> O la douceur des douceurs feminines?
> O cœur sans fiel? O race d'excellence?
> O dur mari rempli de violence."

The rest is uninteresting. But the reference to Ercole, allowing for prejudice, could not have been uttered, one imagines, wholly without justification. No fundamentally pleasant person could be referred to so uncompromisingly as steeped in hateful violences.

Marot sided deeply with Renée, and wrote some additional verses to Margaret, which he told her openly were intended to convey a picture of the wrongs and sufferings to which the duchess was subjected. All the lines dealing directly with the subject read as if sincere and vivid, while the note of gravity was struck in the poignant bluntness of the opening verse. Marot meant the queen to realize that he handled something unmistakably and acutely tragic—

"Playne les morts qui plaindre les voudra
Tant que vivrai mon cœur se résoudra
A plaindre ceux que douleur assauldra
En cette vie.

. . . . . .

"Ha Marguerite, écoute la souffrance
Du noble cœur de Renée de France
Puis comme sœur plus fort que d'espérance
Console-la.

"Tu sais comment hors son pays alla
Et que parens et amis laissa là,
Mais tu ne sais quel traitement elle a
En terre étrange.

"De cent couleurs en une heure elle change,
En ses repas percée d'angoisse mange
Et en son vin larmes fait melange
Tout par ennui.

"Ennui reçu du coté de celui
Qui dut être sa joie et son appui
Ennui plus grief que s'il venait d'autrui
Et plus à craindre."

. . . . . .

Few phrases could expose more explicitly a brutal husband. Allowing for exaggeration, Ercole obviously behaved like a boor, making his wife's meals, when he was present, little else than a weeping martyrdom. Renée certainly had the temperament to cry often and easily, though not tempestuously; but at Ferrara the vague-looking eyes seem to have possessed ample reason for being constantly and bitterly watered. Marot, of course, had neither the opportunity nor the desire to dwell upon intervals of passivity. But, as one knows, there must inevitably have been some in the hectored years of Renée's Italian existence. And among them was certainly the visit of Vittoria Colonna. She stayed for ten months, and all the information given implies that during that period there was almost peace at the Castello. This is to Ercole's credit, for Vittoria Colonna would have bored any but a practised intelligence. Her *forte* lay in an unerring sense of what was fine in everything—art, conduct, and deliberation. Clever men adored her, and her brain was certainly imposing, deliberate, attentive, and comprehending. The woman who understood Michelangelo could scarcely fail to grasp the meanings of lesser intelligences. But the minor gaieties she had not; the quaint, swift humour

with which subtle women sweep away tension would never have lightened Vittoria's solid arguments. She wrote poetry—very insincere and laboured—but she possessed no imagination. The gravity of existence, and the fact that each soul in it is born to exist eternally, clothed her thoughts with an almost restricting austerity. Few jokes would have sounded suitable in her presence. She appeared too exquisitely reasonable, cool, and punctiliously magnificent for any descent into the ridiculous.

Undoubtedly Vittoria's presence eased domestic friction, though it is doubtful, notwithstanding, whether Renée liked her. There are letters between Vittoria and Ercole, but none to be found between the two women. Vittoria Colonna was inherently good, but she was also triumphant, pampered, flattered, and successful. When she came to Ferrara she was received with a voluntary public ovation. Flanked by the mental sumptuousness of this efficient creature, Renée's insignificance was accentuated; the contrast dragged the whole extent of her ineffectuality into light. And Renée, almost meek in appearance, with her "weakened body," as Brantome put it, and her vague-looking face, was not meek in disposition. She forgot at no time of her life

that but for the Salic law she would have sat upon the throne of France.

There is no statement against the existence of affection between the two women, but the probabilities are not for it. There is far more likelihood that Vittoria got upon her hostess's nerves, and chilled her by flaming, for all her disadvantages of years, with a sort of opulent beauty that intensified the pallid ugliness of the foreign duchess. Small wonder that Renée turned to the sympathy offered by Monsieur Pons; small wonder that she permitted the elegant and amiable Frenchman to make inroads upon her affections.

Monsieur Pons represents the solitary scandal of Renée's existence. Some writers do not like Monsieur Pons. They desire the page unblemished by this warm and doubtful incident. To them Renée must stand as a blameless martyr to the cause of Protestantism, and this friendship confuses the picture. In such hands Monsieur Pons fades into an insignificance not sufficiently substantial for impropriety.

The effacement is entirely to be regretted. Monsieur Pons was the one wholly tender circumstance in Renée's life. It is ridiculous to pretend that she did not love him. Her harassed

heart, unaccustomed to being besieged, surrendered naturally to sympathetic advances from a fascinating man of her own nationality. He made love to her discreetly, mildly, and, no doubt, indirectly, while the woman warmed under it before she realized the fearsome pleasantness of the sensation. They may actually have had sympathy of temperament. Monsieur Pons also may really have experienced a slight compassionate tenderness for the frail, misshapen little duchess, who was openly ill-treated by a lusty and unfaithful husband. It is difficult to probe Monsieur Pon's motives. Policy is rarely absent from the mind of those who deal with powerful persons. He was upon admirable terms with his own wife. So was Renée, notwithstanding a friendship for the husband exhilarated by a hint of something just a little more alive and poignant. Genuine impropriety, one feels assured, there was not. Yet to those anxious for scandal the duchess's letters would in themselves be considered sufficient to take away any woman's character. They are personal, intimate, and interwoven with unspoken statements. Actually they have charm —the charm that issues when a woman with some grace of mind desires her letter to be chiefly a persuasive form of flirtation. The word "love"

is not mentioned in them, but for all that they are undeniably love-letters. They are, in addition, the love-letters of a woman not yet muddled by any uncertainty as to the recipient's reciprocity.

It must be admitted that Renée, had she behaved with strict decorum, would not have written these documents. Married persons forfeit the licence to indulge in a certain kind of correspondence. But there is no reason to suppose that because a woman writes a delicately flirtatious letter she has any evil thoughts at the back of it, or that the relations of the two will at any time transgress the limits of an audacious friendliness. The mistake is usually made, though few things show less acquaintance with human nature.

Renée of Ferrara was temperamentally incapable of the scandal some of her biographers have foisted upon her. Putting it upon the lowest basis, she had neither sufficient courage nor sufficient pliancy for unfaithfulness. The distinguishing trait of Renée's character was her incapacity ever to go the extreme length in anything. There are no tenable grounds, besides, for supposing that she desired to forget right living for Monsieur Pons and passion. She was not an ardent woman; the dull face expresses

nothing so unmistakable as a wistful apathy and a bad circulation.

From the internal evidence of the letters themselves, one finds a romantic and sentimental friendship, or, phrased more colloquially, a flirtation. But the essence of a flirtation is to play at being more than it is in reality—to hover skilfully about borders neither player would really care to trespass. Not a phrase in Renée's letters reveals any desire to thrust aside cautious boundaries. She had also perfect knowledge of Monsieur Pons's comfortable domestic circumstances. Madame de Pons was her friend, the closest woman companion remaining to her. What is more than likely is that she and Madame Pons —madame with a finger secretly to her nose— enjoyed a perfect understanding as to Renée's relations with the husband. They agreed together in worship of Monsieur Pons, while he on his side was supposed to love them both—though Renée, of course, with discretion, with reverence, with the distance that her rank necessitated.

Madame Pons was safe; she could afford this dismal and lonely woman some farcical illusions. Renée, in consequence, was allowed her pathetic share in Monsieur Pons. The real, warm, comfortable possession could only be the wife's, but

Renée felt that she also had her small, vague place; she was included; she was dear to Monsieur Pons; she had her right of confidences, and perhaps—who knows?—in certain ways, might convey an appeal his wife lacked possession of. The wanderings of a heart ill-fed are always wild and a little tragic.

The letters were written during a diplomatic mission to France, upon which Monsieur Pons had been sent by the duke. They contain intimate accounts of little everyday doings, put down with a woeful disregard of grammar, and yet with something approaching literary instinct. Reading them, one discovers that the duchess was not an entirely stupid woman. Without possessing the least intellectual capacity, she shows a gift of irony, of graceful utterance, and of oblique suggestion that is totally unexpected.

She says in one, "If this letter is badly written, it is because of the place and the hour, for I write in bed, and I began so early that I can scarcely see clearly; but I hope to write more every day until the Basque starts again. I began yesterday, the very day he arrived. . . . The wee doggie came, and fondled me a thousand times, in betweenwhiles seizing the pen with his little teeth, after which he came and settled himself

on my arm, with the pen under his head, and so went to sleep, and I too, to keep him company, for I don't know which of us needed it most." This little pet dog, and another, evidently given to her by Monsieur Pons, figure several times in the correspondence. She writes again, "The Basque will give you an account of your wife's state of health, of our little company, and, above all, of the wee doggies who still, as always, sleep with me, and refuse to leave my side."

How much Monsieur Pons was missed, is said many times and in diverse ways. She conveys it very prettily upon one occasion, in the statement, "Lesleu was saying that since you had gone the house seems deserted. He is not the only one who thinks this. Several others say the same, and there are some who are only too well aware of it." In French the meaning is both more finely and more definitely transmitted. In another place she says, "We need you to bring back the joy you took away with your departure."

Madame Pons gave birth to a boy during her husband's absence, and Renée writes that it resembles its father in chin and mouth, adding immediately that she had kissed the little lips "two or three" times. She also says, "He has

such a sweet expression; everybody likes to look at him. He does not sulk like the others." His mouth, she states, is infinitesimal. Later, when his wife continued very unwell, Renée wrote, "I beg you to try and return before the winter, as much for her as for me, of whom I will say nothing, for I think less of my own troubles than that you should be successful in your undertaking."

There were no concealments between Monsieur Pons and herself concerning Ercole. She tells the diplomatist that her visit to France had once more been broached by the ambassador, who had received the usual answer, "when the weather permitted." With delicious irony the duchess adds, "I think he means when the wind carries me." At all times she was indifferent to her husband's mistresses. And she tells Monsieur Pons, "Monday, which was the eve of St. John, I took him (the ambassador) to the mountain where monsieur was having supper with the Calcaquine. . . . The day after the birth of your son I had supper with the cardinal and monsieur, and the day of St. John I had supper in the '*bosquet*' with monsieur and the ambassador." The Contessa Calcaquine was at that time Ercole's mistress.

In the continuation of daily details Renée makes it quite clear how little she enjoyed "monsieur's" society. She had been asked by him to join, if she cared to, a little party spending the evening on the hill—presumably at the contessa's. But, she says, with an undercurrent of wider meaning than the actual words express, "I made the excuse that it would be too late."

Renée implied no objection upon the grounds of the hostess. She mentions quite gaily a visit to one of Ercole's ladies, concluding, "That is all the fresh air I have had since you left, but I am waiting till your wife is up again, and then we shall go out together, and with all the more pleasure because you will be with us."

It is deeply to be regretted that all these letters, unknown to Renée, were intercepted by the duke, though he must have been interested at the almost contemptuous calm of his wife's attitude towards him personally. Renée wondered why the answers from France were so few. She had no suspicion that her lengthy correspondence lay locked up in the care of her husband, and never journeyed across the Alps at any time. Ercole, secretive by nature and by training, made no remarks about these intercepted letters. With a house full of spies, he stood in

a position to know how flimsy the flirtation really was. When Monsieur Pons returned, he allowed the same intimacy as previously. Only very soon afterwards Renée was sent into the country and kept there, away from her friend.

Then Ercole, considering the moment opportune, got rid of both wife and husband. A story of an extremely mischievous nature was foisted upon them. The charges were, in fact, dangerous for two foreigners in the power of a man hating them both. Renée's household became shaken to the depths with fear and excitement, and Monsieur and Madame Pons fled almost immediately to Venice. The action was no more than wise. Ercole had called Madame Pons "an infernal fury." Any possible extremity would have been proceeded to, if even a fraction of the charges stated could have been proved against them.

The months that followed were among the most dismal of Renée's life. The flight of her friend chilled her to the marrow of her being. Realization could not be avoided. She was over thirty, and the bitter sense of being suddenly old and weary is unavoidable in any woman brusquely abandoned by the man who has kept her young with kindnesses. All the vaporous flimsiness of

her hold upon Monsieur Pons lay brutally exposed and patent. His wife had got into difficulties; his business lay immediately with the welfare of his wife. No outside woman existed in the intimate agitation of private affairs. Renée was simply dropped like some acquaintance grown needless, and husband, wife, and the baby, whose mouth Renée had described as so incredibly small, practically withdrew from her existence.

The next crucial circumstance—perhaps the most crucial of Renée's long and uncomfortable life—was her encounter with the Inquisition. This supreme test of Renée's character came when Paul III. died and Julius III. succeeded to the throne of Rome. Paul had been mild, gentle, and favourable to some reformation in the ways of the Church. Contarini, in a letter, spoke of him as "this our good old man." His successor had no leanings towards change; mercy sent no gentle warmth through his system. The heresy practised by the Duchess of Ferrara had been notorious for a considerable period; her household constituted a sanctuary for heretics; she permitted herself Protestant preachers and Protestant services. Her attendance at mass had ceased, and she was accused, though it seems unjustly, of eating meat on Fridays.

Ercole's position, consequently, at this time was far from easy, the basis of his political security requiring that he should maintain peace with the authorities of Rome. Renée's new religion endangered his duchy. She either did not understand the political risks of what she persisted in doing, or did not care. But Ercole, alarmed as well as furious, wrote bluntly to the King of France, saying what he thought of her. The unburdenment was no longer incautious. Francis I. had been dead some time. Henry II. felt no obligation to be bothered by an elderly woman whom he did not know, and whose claims upon him were negligible. Himself an intolerant Roman Catholic, he wrote to her upon receiving Ercole's letter, and explained unambiguously that should she be relying upon the support of France, her confidence was founded upon false anticipations. He did more—he sent the famous Inquisitor Orriz, with orders to use "rigour and severity," sooner than return to France without having reduced the elderly lady to a proper religious disposition.

The letter in which Orriz received directions shows a curious method of thinking. Renée was exhorted to return more easily to the Mother Church, "by consideration of the great favours

which God has granted to her, and among others that of being the issue of the purest blood of the most Christian house of France, where no monster has ever existed." The sentence ended with the statement that should she "choose to remain in stubbornness and pertinacity, it would displease the king as much as anything in the world, and would cause him entirely to forget the friendship, with all the observances and demonstrations of a good nephew, he hating nothing with a greater hatred than all those of the reprobate sects, whose mortal enemy he was."

The following paragraph was still more plain spoken, and might well have sent a shiver through the hard-pressed duchess. Henry wrote, "And if, after such remonstrances and persuasions, together with those which the said Doctor Orriz shall employ of his own way and profession, to make her know the truth, and the difference there is between light and darkness, it shall appear that he is unable by gentle means to gain her and to reclaim her, he shall take counsel with the said lord duke as to what can possibly be done in the way of rigour and severity to bring her to reason."

Renée's position had at last become dire and

dangerous. She stood with none to help her, pressed about by a crowd of enemies. From the moment Orriz arrived in Ferrara her life became a nightmare. When he chose to preach, she had to listen; when he questioned, she had to answer; when he threatened, she had to preserve quiescence. Morning, noon, and evening, the menacing presence of the French Inquisitor kept her shaken, sickened, lacerated. His arguments could only have been torture to her, for pitted against the subtlety of the trained heretic-catcher, Renée's mentality would have been the incarnation of incoherent feebleness. Her person, moreover, made no appeal to mercy; ugly, drear, and wrinkled, she did not even possess dramatic dignity—only tears and an obstreperous dismalness of manner. Gradually, however, Orriz was to discover that dismalness did not necessarily accompany weakness. He could make her cry, but that was about all he could do with her. His own temper must have quickly sharpened. The position left him ridiculous. Presently the Inquisitor and the husband took counsel together. Renée's unexpected fortitude proved equally serious for both. Ercole had given his word to the Pope that the lady should return duly submissive to the fold she outraged. Renée had

RENÉE, DUCHESS OF FERRARA

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got to be mastered somehow. Words left her tearfully obstinate—there remained nothing but harsher measures. Ercole himself wrote in a letter, "We kept her shut up for fifteen days, with only people who had no sort of Lutheran tendencies to wait upon her. We also threatened to confiscate all her property."

She held out, notwithstanding. Some degree of courage must have stiffened resistance, but it also is probable that the little creature relied upon a definite limit to persecution. A daughter of the royal house of France stood too high for genuine martyrdom. She had, in addition, a secret Bull previously given her by Paul III., which exempted her from the jurisdiction of all local inquisitions.

Up to a certain point there is, beyond question, an underflow of sweetness in being persecuted, especially when, besides the persecutors, there are people who realize the persecution. To show endurance is softly comforting to the soul. Character, exultant at finding itself not wholly worthless, is joyous below its pain. There are few people, indeed, who do not want to prove themselves morally better than their ordinary conduct, and who are not exalted by a sudden blaze of inner illumination when they have let the

good rise triumphant over an ardent and forceful temptation. At any rate, whether Renée was, or was not, sustained by a sense of proving something finer than she had hoped for, she certainly showed such curious tranquillity that those who attended her remarked upon it. The fact puzzled everybody—she was by nature distinctly flaccid. It has since been put down to the possession of the Bull from Paul III., but the explanation is unlikely. Nothing could be more simple than a fresh Papal Bull annulling the first. Besides, what followed shows that she either made no use of it, or was quickly undeceived as to its utility.

But the crisis of her life was stalking grimly nearer every hour. Confinement leaving steadfastness intact, a rasped husband and exasperated inquisitor flung themselves upon a last extremity, and Renée, Duchess of Farrara, was actually brought before the Ferrarese Inquisition, and tried for heresy by that body. Her answers at the trial are not given, but that she went through the ordeal at all compels admiration. She was utterly alone—hemmed in by Roman Catholics and Italians—and grievously subject to prostration and headaches. Few people thought of her save as an unmitigated nuisance. Still she continued

firm. Her answers were probably stupid and reiterated, but if flustered on the surface she was stolid at the foundations. After an angry, blustering trial, during which nobody could browbeat her into helplessness, defeat had to be admitted, and a formal sentence passed against the duchess. She may have winced for a moment when it came; the indignity alone would have stung her like a blow upon the face. There was nothing in this world she felt more pride in than the fact that she was a king's daughter; this sentence put her on the level of any refractory woman that the Church and her husband considered in need of punishment. She was to suffer perpetual solitary imprisonment, and her children and the greater part of her revenue were to be taken from her.

Still she maintained the same unaccountable self-possession. It seemed almost as if some store of inner strength placed her beyond the reach of personal sufferings. All who knew her were bewildered. For, the very morning after condemnation, she was driven from the Castello to an old building next door, to be imprisoned under guards chosen carefully by Ercole. Two servants, also picked out by him, were the only people allowed in her presence.

She held out for a week. It was too little; mere sulkiness could have endured that period. Six months would have made her sympathetic and dignified, a week rendered her previous fortitude useless. Still, it should be borne in mind that imprisonment for life with two foreigners of a different class is very cold to the heart after the first glow of resistance has faded. Renée had known her triumph. The famous Inquisitor, so proud of his infallible method, had exhausted cunning for nothing. They were obliged to shut her up for the humiliating reason that not one of them had been able to move her by a hair's breadth. She had that victory to kindle satisfaction with for the rest of existence.

During a day or two she probably lived supported by the joy of steadfast conduct. Then gradually the meaning of a lifetime's solitude pressed upon imagination. At any rate, by the end of seven days, everybody knew in Ferrara that the duchess had surrendered. The news reduced her to an absurdity; she had possessed sufficient courage to be maddening, and no more. Capitulation, however, was complete. She not only expressed her desire openly to attend mass, but her willingness to return to confession. By her own choice, a Jesuit confessor was sent for,

and in a "flood of tears" the necessary recantation was given.

Instantly the guards were withdrawn, and her ordinary household allowed to recommence attendance. The struggle was over. Ercole could feel at last that he had tamed her, and in a few days the surface showed no signs of the immense upheaval it had suffered. Only the Protestants stood aghast. Calvin wrote bitterly when he heard of it: "What shall I say, except that constancy is a very rare virtue among the great of this world?" Olympia Morata, who had a sore place in her thoughts made by Renée, declared that she was not surprised, and that she had always said it was *une tête legère.*

Upon one point, notwithstanding, the duchess remained unexpectedly firm. She had surrendered a good deal. But she drew the line for the future at playing love-scenes with the man who had caused her to be tried and imprisoned like a common criminal.

From the time of her trial, Renée occupied a separate establishment, though Ercole, to whom she could do no right, made even this a grievance, and complained that "the duchess refused to return to the chamber they had shared for fifteen years, and in which they had made such beautiful children."

With this brief, tense, and futile drama, the interest of Renée's life evaporates. The remainder, —long and untranquil though it was,—reads like an anti-climax. She never knew a year's serenity to the end of her lengthy and eventful existence. And yet all that followed has a certain sameness and monotony. The unhappinesses were constantly repeated; also the piteous efforts to remain firm in Protestantism only to be driven back again to the old faith of her people.

In 1559 Ercole died, and from that day Renée passed entirely out of the sphere of the Renaissance into that of the Reformation. She returned to France, and went to live at the town of Montargis, which belonged to her. Comfort she never knew again. Her castle was so constantly overcrowded that it became impossible to move in it for people. Brantome, who visited her there, says he saw "three hundred Protestant refugees," on the occasion of his visit. Horrors, bloodshed, and persecutions became her daily preoccupations. Blood, at that period in France. made the world look red. During the massacre of St. Bartholomew, she was in Paris, and remained for nine days shut up in her rooms, before the gates of Paris were opened once more, and she was able to fly back to Montargis.

But the latter part of her existence nobly atoned for the dispirited uselessness of the beginning. She took mass, and professed to be a humble and obedient daughter of the Pope when there was no alternative between that and being driven out of Montargis. But continuously, hourly, and unhesitatingly, she helped all those who came to her.

At the time of her death she was sixty-four, though long before that time she had looked a hundred. All her friends died before she did. Even Calvin, who from the day she left Ferrara, had been the real prop of her existence, passed out of life twelve years earlier.

Though almost all that was best of the Renaissance seemed gathered into the stretch of Renée's existence, it is difficult to remember her association with it. Tintoretti, Titian, Correggio, and Raphael were the joy of Italy during her lifetime. Ariosto, Tasso, Montaigne, all belong to this period—Ariosto dying when she was twenty-three, while Tasso outlived her by many years. She passed the whole of her married life in a court of impassioned connoisseurs, and never rose above a taste for cheap majolica. Her niche was in a convent, a hospital, or a training school for orphans, not in a centre of artistic and literary efflorescence.

She was unfortunate all her life, and even after death it remained her tragic fate to be a nuisance. Her son, Alphonso III., found difficulty in coming to a decision as to what behaviour to observe about the circumstance. She had been his mother, but she had also been a heretic. In the end he compromised, ordering mourning for a brief period, but omitting any mourning services. They buried her at Montargis, and on her tomb made no mention of Italy, or of her discomforted connection with the House of Ferrara. The inscription merely bore the words—

"Renée de France, Duchesse de Chartres, Comtesse de Gisors et Madame de Montargis.

May many daughters of France yet rise to emulate the example of her faith, patience, and charity."

At a brief glance only the last virtue appears appropriate. But the grace of Renée's life lies in the fact that she used it for development. The self-engrossed, unfriendly girl who fought with Ercole, slowly but momentously learned from experience. Handicapped both by nature and circumstances, she yet issued from the tempestuous stumblings of youth into an old age, still clumsy enough to an eye seeing only in a dull moment, but exquisite to a consciousness aware how the soul had continuously developed

through every untoward incident of existence. As a girl Renée had been too querulous to circumvent her own ugliness. But as an old woman she rendered it of no account. Surely—though probably unconsciously—she learnt at last that it is what a nature gives from within that is the ultimate test of value, and that to a great heart there are no denials, and cannot be—in the world's colossal and unceasing need of sympathy—anything but welcome and appreciation.

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